[00:00:00]

John Moe: The scary thing to say is that we're going to talk about trauma today. I'm not gonna say the scary thing. I'm gonna talk about kindness. Self-kindness. I'm going to talk about taking care of yourself, giving yourself room, giving yourself grace, giving yourself some of the understanding and patience you might need to get back to realizing you are a good person—a worthwhile person, a person deserving of love and happiness and respect and care. And I have some examples in today's episode.

It is *Depresh Mode*. I'm John Moe. I'm glad you're here.

Transition: Spirited acoustic guitar.

John Moe: So, I kind of do have to bring it back to trauma just a little. Chances are you've experienced trauma in your life: a jolt to your system, an event or many events that shook you up. Maybe you haven't, you sweet child. But in that case, you almost certainly will. Sorry. Rough place out there.

In a little bit, I'm going to talk to Amanda Knox. She, of course, was wrongly accused of her roommate's murder in Italy, underwent extensive trial, spent years in jail, all traumatic events. She's the star of a new documentary where she returns to Italy, talks with the prosecutor she faced there. And we talked about trauma and kindness.

But first, I've been thinking about how we are not okay here in Minnesota, and how events and the state of affairs are echoing in our day-to-day world. Not that we're completely unique in Minnesota. Other communities have been undergoing very difficult times as well. Others may still, in the future. *(Sighing.)* I hope not. Real quick content warning here: mentioning of suicide without any detail.

Soon after my brother died—suddenly, by suicide—I was in the underground parking garage of a public library in Seattle's Greenwood neighborhood. Backing my car up, I absolutely crunched into a huge concrete pillar. It was clearly marked; it had reflective paint. I smacked right into it. And I felt bereft! Sad, angry at myself. Just a mess. Friends, I freaked out <u>way</u> more than the event merited. Because I was insured, and shit happens. Recounting the event later to a loved one, I was told, "Well, of course that happened. You are broken. Your mind isn't working normal right now because of Rick"—my brother.

After that, I tried to forgive myself for things. Decreased productivity at work—a very understanding employer helped—shorter attention span, missed household chores, not being as present for people. Because this new horrible thing was

suddenly consuming huge amounts of mind space. Other stuff got pushed aside. Why should—how could!—anything be normal, when I was living in a reality where something so not-normal had just gone down? It was a different world than before. And in this one, I was bound to be disoriented. The concrete pillar was a completely logical result of what had occurred.

Rick's death was a traumatic event. I saw his body in the ER just before he finally passed. It's a different trauma than the shared community trauma of the ICE occupation of the Twin Cities. But they are both traumas. And I think we, here in Minnesota, are collectively experiencing a trauma response. I keep hearing about people here—friends, folks I know—just not functioning like they otherwise would. Productivity, attention span, organization, just keeping one's shit together. It's all suffering. And I think it's a response to the world itself being out of kilter.

We can't function, because our world won't either. Our neighbors are killed for no reason. We're patrolling the streets when we have busy lives to lead. We're guarding our kids' schools instead of letting our government do it. Liam Ramos, five years old, in his blue bunny hat and backpack—both of which are now reportedly missing. This is an ongoing traumatic situation, and we are behaving in direct response to that. So, all sorts of things that wouldn't make sense before make plenty of sense now. We fight, we fly, we freeze.

[00:05:00]

We fail to reply to emails and texts. We forget why we walked into a room. We cry at weird times and in weird places. We back our cars into pillars. A person's natural habit is to blame themselves when something goes wrong, especially someone prone to depression or anxiety. It's not your fault. Give yourself slack, patience, and care, and kindness. It's trauma that is still happening—and will for a while, at least. And even after everyone from ICE leaves—if they do—we'll still live with it forever. There are people to blame for the harm being afflicted on Minnesota. Minnesotans aren't among them.

Forgive yourself. Return that email tomorrow. Vacuum some other time. And maybe check one more time before backing up.

Transition: Soothing acoustic guitar.

John Moe: Amanda Knox was a 20-year-old University of Washington student studying abroad in Perugia, Italy. In 2007 she shared an apartment with two Italian law students and a British student, Meredith Kercher. Meredith was raped and murdered. Amanda and her Italian boyfriend Raffaele Sollecito were arrested and charged with the crime.

Amanda became very famous. The press dubbed her Foxy Knoxy. The prosecution made up elaborate stories to paint Amanda as a murderous monster—stories untethered to plausibility. And pop culture kind of ate it up. After two years, she and Raffaele were found guilty, sentenced to 26 years. Meanwhile, another person—Rudy Guede—had already been convicted of Meredith's murder.

In 2011, the convictions were overturned, and Amanda went home to Seattle. Then a new trial was ordered. Amanda and Raffaele were convicted again. Then that conviction was overturned. And they were finally exonerated in 2015—8 years after the incident. 11 years later, Amanda is married, has two kids, and has been making trips back to Italy to speak out for the wrongly convicted and to meet with the prosecutor who made up all that wild stuff about her. And they do meet face-to-face, and you can watch it in *Mouth of the Wolf: Amanda Knox Returns to Italy* which just came out on Hulu. There's a lot of tension in the room when these two meet.

There's also a path to healing. Their meeting doesn't make everything okay. Nothing will ever be okay again in that situation but it's a move forward. I spoke with Amanda Knox. Her husband Christopher Robinson was heavily involved in the production of the documentary, and he joined us as well. I asked Amanda how she was doing.

Transition: Spirited acoustic guitar.

Amanda Knox: I'm doing great! I mean, I'm in a completely different head space than documentary zone, 'cause I'm gonna be doing some standup later tonight. So, I am running through my bits in my head. I'll try to keep them out of the show for you, though.

(They laugh.)

John Moe: Well, the subject matter might help with that a little.

(Amanda chuckles knowingly.)

When did you start doing standup?

Amanda Knox: A few years ago. I'm not one of those people that every weekend they're out there working the clubs. Like, I have two small children. But when I have the opportunity, I always really enjoy it. And I love comedy. I always have. I'm friends with quite a few comedians, and so what ends up happening is, when a friend comedian of mine comes into town, I usually say, "Hey! I'm gonna come to your show. And better yet, I'll open for you."

And they say, "Yay!" So, yeah.

John Moe: Oh, okay. Oh, nice! Okay. Well, I wanna talk about the documentary about *Mouth of the Wolf: Amanda Knox Returns to Italy*. But if you have Amanda Knox here to tell her story, that's kind of what you need to do.

(Amanda affirms.)

I want to talk about—yeah, going back to Perugia, but first we'll talk about what happened in Perugia. How long were you actually in jail in Italy?

Amanda Knox: Four years.

John Moe: Four years. Okay.

Amanda Knox: And on trial for murder for around eight. Yeah.

John Moe: Part of what really interests me about your story in conjunction with this new documentary is the idea of processing trauma, the idea of something happening to you, and then you have to carry that, and you have to process that. You have to deal with that, and you can never really escape it. It's with you for a while.

[00:10:00]

Can you talk, if you you're willing to, about some of the abuse; about some of the treatment; about some of the traumatic things that happened during your time in prison, outside of being accused of this horrible murder that you didn't commit?

Amanda Knox: Yeah. I mean, I think the first thing that I want to point out the first trauma wasn't even prison at all. It was coming home to discover that my roommate—and my friend—had been raped and murdered, and that my home was a crime scene. Like, even if none of the other stuff had ever happened, I would be living—

John Moe: Yeah. Even if you caught a flight home that day.

Amanda Knox: Right? And nobody said—you know, nobody ever knew who I was, just like every other friend of Meredith's in that town, I would be living the rest of my life with the horror of that and the survivor's guilt of that. Like, two young women went to go study abroad in Perugia, Italy, and only one survived to tell the tale. That is something that I think about a lot that gives me a really deep

appreciation for being alive and how important it is to live an examined and fulfilled life—to not take that for granted. So, there's that trauma. There's the trauma that I experienced at the hands of the police. So, being lied to, being manipulated, being physically hit, being screamed at. Like, I have never been more terrified in my life than when I was in a closed office with police officers who would not take "I don't know" for an answer.

And then, of course, I spent years in prison, which—it is an incredibly isolated, punitive environment. Have you ever been to a prison before or—?

John Moe: *(Sighing.)* I've been to a women's prison as a visitor once, a long time ago. But I know that there's tremendous variation in what a prison can be.

Amanda Knox: Absolutely. Yeah. So, there is tremendous variation in prisons. The one unifying factor is that when you are a prisoner, you do not have a say over your life in a lot of ways. You do not have privacy; you don't have agency; you don't have autonomy. There's very little that you actually have control over. Your possessions, your communication, your relationships, all of them are at the whim and at the mercy of those who are locking you away. And so, there is a deep sense of helplessness that can fall upon you. And then of course, depending on the prison, it can be more or less dangerous and more or less sort of devoid of any kind of rehabilitative activity.

My prison was not the worst prison in Italy, but it's not like— I didn't get to have a job, necessarily. Like, jobs were rare and few-and-far between. They were coveted. I had a job for a very short period of time. But again, that was because there weren't jobs to go around. The only teacher who actually worked in the prison was an elementary school teacher who was there to teach people how to read and write, because the vast majority of the people I was imprisoned with were illiterate. And so, no one who was in a position to offer me any kind of guidance or anything like that. The only spiritual advisor was a very specific branch of—you know, it was a very specific religion: Catholicism. He happened to be a <u>brilliant</u> person who was very open and compassionate and easy to talk to. So, I think I got lucky in that regard.

But in terms of like any other form of spiritual or philosophical companion, that didn't exist. And I spent—you know—eight months in isolation when I was first in prison before I was introduced to gen pop. And that itself came with its own psychological difficulties. But then gen pop was—

John Moe: Wait, wait. What's gen pop?

Amanda Knox: General population. It means that you are now around other people. You can go— Like, for instance, if I wanted to go outside during my two hours of outside time every day, I was alone. I was in a small, little space alone. I was not allowed to talk to other people when I was in isolation. So, gen pop means you get to go into the big outside area where other people are, and you can walk around and talk to people. So, it was— But even that comes with its own difficulties.

[00:15:00]

Because there are a lot of really traumatized and angry and impulsive and violent people in prison. And so, you live in a constant state of hypervigilance. And I went from being the kind of person who wakes up happy, and generally spends my day happy, and goes to bed happy, to a person who lived in perpetual sadness. Like, on my absolute best days, I was just sad. And I was functional. I was— It's amazing to me, even looking back today, how—at only 20 years old—I was remarkably able to function despite the grief and the fear and the despair. I mean, I don't know. I don't know really what to attribute that to except a "I'm lucky" in how I'm— *(chuckling)* you know—constitutionally made. But I was sad. I was just sad, and I felt like I was living somebody else's life by mistake, that I didn't get to live my life. And I really struggled with that emotionally and psychologically.

John Moe: Was there a sense that you had been erased? That like you were no longer yourself? I just think of so much personhood being taken away from you, especially when you're 20! Did it just feel like you had become a different person?

Amanda Knox: It's not that I became a different person. The message that the whole world was telling me though was that I didn't matter. That the truth didn't matter, and that my life didn't matter. I became this object that people could project all of their fears and fantasies and hatred onto. And in the aftermath of prison, like— Chris, my husband, is able to appreciate this coming into my life. Like, he— Even after prison, it's not like that idea of me goes away. And that's something that Chris shows in the documentary is him grappling with the fact that people hate me.

Chris Robinson: There's a lot of overlapping traumas there. I mean, you focused in on the discovery of Meredith's body trauma, the prison trauma. You didn't even mention like predatory guards in prison, another element of that. Right? But then you're bringing up, John, like sort of reputational or narrative trauma you might call it.

Amanda Knox: Yeah.

Chris Robinson: There's also just trial. Like, the trial went on for eight years, and that is its own kind of trauma—having to sit there over mind-numbing hours while people describe you in ways that you don't recognize yourself and sit there—you know.

Amanda Knox: And then have that be repeated in the media over and over again. And like, the number of news programs where they dissected my facial expressions or called in a local psychic to wave her hand over a picture of me and describe how evil I am. *(Chuckling.)* Like, it's sounds funny, but—

John Moe: Yeah. Were you aware of all that though in the prison? Of the Foxy Knoxy character and kind of this—like, your global image? Were you aware of that from your cell?

Amanda Knox: So, it was difficult to be aware of how global, how international, it was. But it absolutely took hold of all of Italy. And it was very apparent for me from the very beginning that I was treated— I was different than other prisoners. Other prisoners were watching the news about me constantly. There were news programs; there were TV programs, talk shows, everyone talking about this case, talking about me. And so, I was the famous one in prison, which meant I was the subject of everyone's gossip. And it was, again, one of those extremely isolating experiences where this idea of me exists and I have zero say over it.

It was something that I've seen people call narrative foreclosure, when you are not the protagonist of your own life anymore; you are just the villain in someone else's story. And there's nothing you can do about it. You don't get to be an author of your own legacy. And it's a deeply— It's an existential crisis.

John Moe: There was something you said in the documentary that I thought was really moving.

Clip:

Music: Somber piano.

Amanda Knox *(Mouth of the Wolf)*: *(Voice trembling.)* I think the sort of mistake that people make when they're dealing with trauma is they try to get back to being the person who they were before it happened. But really, the trick to resilience is not going back to who you were. It's finding out and having a say in who you become.

John Moe: You're released. You go back to the states. You're still in this ongoing rollercoaster of a trial, but you're out of the jail.

[00:20:00]

Who did you become as a result of that ordeal? Like, who arrived back in Seattle, versus who flew out to Italy in the first place?

Amanda Knox: That's a great question, because the reason I was able to say that in the documentary was because I had learned that truth the hard way, right? *(Chuckles.)*

Like, I had assumed—or I'd hoped, I guess, all of those years in prison—if I did get out, if I was vindicated and freed—that I would get to go back to my life. That I would stop living this other person's life that I was living by mistake, and I would get to go back to being an anonymous college student. And of course, that did not happen. But even if—like, let's just say that the paparazzi hadn't swarmed my house and camped out there for months on end; let's just say that I was able to go throughout my life and people actually, genuinely let me move on. I didn't get to just go back to being the girl who hadn't survived prison. *(Chuckles dryly.)*

Like, I had lost a friend, had been put on trial, and had to live in prison. And so, that was now a part of my existence. And I had to accept and grapple with the consequences of that. And one of the things that felt so heavy for me was that I was carrying the consequences of other people's misconduct and crimes. I was the one who was burdened with those consequences. And I didn't really know how to hold those things, if they were just this ball-and-chain that was holding me back, or if I could somehow reframe my experience of those things as information, as something that gave me momentum. And this is something that Chris really got to watch up close as my partner, who I got lucky enough to eventually meet on this journey of making the mistake of trying to go back to the life that I had and utterly failing.

Like, he came into my life a few years into my freedom. He came into my life very shortly after I was definitively exonerated, so I was no longer facing potential prison time, living in a state of limbo. But like, I was still trying to make sense of this really big and prolonged trauma. Like, it wasn't just a thing that happened in a moment in time. It was years. My entire adult life was an ongoing trauma and trying to make sense of that without losing who I was.

And in a way—like, one of the things I love about Chris and something that he shows in this documentary is that, in a way, a part of me really did die in Perugia. That girl, that innocent girl who'd never had anything bad happen to her; that did not survive. But like, the parts of me that had been buried but still survived just needed some like love and support in order to come out. The silly side of me, the creative side of me, the—you know—social butterfly part of me. These were parts of me that had been punished and buried. And it was little by little that people came into my life who recognized me for who I am and gave me space to be that in a safe way that really brought me back to life and allowed me to become my full self again.

Chris Robinson: Although, I think it's worth dwelling on the fact that the trauma of prison ended—right?—but the reputational narrative foreclosure thing never ended. In fact, it's kind of still present. Like, at the beginning of this journey in 2019 when we first went back to Italy, the way that the media—with this rabid ferocity—just attached onto Amanda, and we couldn't walk two steps in Italy without people shoving cameras in our faces and writing who-knows-what and all kinds of vicious and slanderous things in their newspapers.

Like, that attention is there still. You know, people are still authoring her story without her permission right now.

John Moe: Amanda, I keep thinking about *(sighs)* another injustice that was done to you. Obviously, the injustice of being accused and imprisoned for a crime you didn't commit, but when someone hears your name—unless they know you—they're going to think about a horrible murder. Like, for most of the world, it goes from your name to a horrible murder you did not commit. You weren't there.

(Amanda confirms.)

[00:25:00]

How have you managed that burden of knowing that people—you know, if they hear your name, if you are introduced and they remember you, they might make a face. Like, how do you carry that?

Amanda Knox: Yeah, it was debilitating for a really long time. I spent years not going out in public, not meeting people, not making friends with people. I was really lonely, and I felt like I didn't belong to the rest of humanity anymore. And I really struggled to imagine how I could accomplish anything in my life that could actually come to define me more than this horrible murder that I was associated with.

John Moe: I wanna get back to the documentary and dive in on that. First, we're gonna take a short break. We'll be right back.

Transition: Spirited acoustic guitar.

(ADVERTSIMENT)

Transition: Gentle acoustic guitar.

John Moe: We're back talking with Amanda Knox and Christopher Robinson.

Why did you decide to go back to Italy?

Amanda Knox: *(Laughs.)* Seems kind of nutty, right? I mean, so *Mouth of the Wolf* covers the three times that I have been back to Italy since I was released from prison. And the first time I went back was upon invitation of the Italy Innocence Project to take part in a very public justice conference to speak about the issue of trial by media. My case was the prime example of trial by media in Italy. It remained a controversial case, and to this day people were debating it in the media. And so, I was a very bold choice. And it was something where even the organizers of the event felt that they had to painstakingly justify inviting me there in the first place, after receiving threats and ridicule. So, it was an extremely controversial decision on their part.

For, my part— You know, for years I felt like I had fled a terrifying experience in Italy, somehow survived that, but I hadn't really had a chance to grieve everything that had happened there. I felt like there was unfinished business. I felt like I needed closure—closure that the justice system had failed to offer me. And I wasn't content to sit back on my heels in the US, waiting for somebody in Italy to do me right, to do me justice. I felt like I had to take that upon myself to pursue and demand accountability, acknowledgement. And the only way I knew to do that was to do it myself. And so, when the Italy Innocence Project offered me this opportunity, I had a very short window to decide if that was something that I felt capable of doing. And it was a really fraught decision.

[00:30:00]

Chris really captures well in the documentary how I didn't just make that *(snaps)* split decision and feel good about it. Aaaall the way through I was conflicted and doubtful and fearful. And yet, determined.

Chris Robinson: And the dangers there are not just trauma and being scared. It's like— She's received death threats from all over the world, but especially in Italy. And she's one of the most hated people in the world over there. And so, the idea that a stranger might attack her in the street was not out of our minds. You know, that was a potential fear.

John Moe: And then how did you decide to bring a film crew, and how did you decide to turn this into a documentary?

Amanda Knox: Well, if by film crew you mean my husband and his phone—

(They laugh.)

John Moe: Okay. Fair enough!

Chris Robinson: Yeah. You know, most of this film is shot on a cell phone. And it's me going like this.

John Moe: It's home movies.

Chris Robinson: Yeah.

Amanda Knox: Yeah, you basically just got a very—a really high-production family vacation video.

(Amanda and Chris laugh.)

Chris Robinson: Well, you know, modern phones can take exquisite videos these days.

John Moe: Very unusual family vacation.

(They agree, chuckling.)

Chris Robinson: Yeah. I think not having a film crew is actually what enables this film to be as intimate as it is. Because a lot of the footage is the two of us in a very intimate space: in our own bedroom on the night before this trip to Italy, or in the immediate aftermath of the meeting with the prosecutor that happens later. Like, these moments that would be changed fundamentally if there was the gaze of strangers there or big cameras and boom mics and all that stuff. Right? This is just two people on an intimate journey and a cell phone for a lot of the time.

Amanda Knox: And for the record, it was his idea. *(Laughs.)* My idea was I just need to get there and do this thing and be on this journey. But Chris, who is a professional storyteller, and my husband—like, that professional storyteller part of him recognized that where there is conflict there is story. He saw that I was experiencing a deep conflict. And so, he recognized that there was something there to document.

Chris Robinson: Well, not just that but also that the trauma and the injustice done to you was a narrative injustice. Like, as someone who spent a lot of time with narrative—I've written several novels—you know, like the trauma, the injustice, is narrative injustice. It's your story being stripped away from you and your character being distorted in the public eye. Like, that's all narrative. And so, a part of rectifying that is also narrative. If the poison is narrative, the remedy is narrative. And so, I felt like this is how I could help you as well. Yeah.

Amanda Knox: Okay. But there's also more to it than that. Because if it was just—like, say that it was just my story. Right? I don't think that would've been worth making a documentary about.

John Moe: Yeah, why not just keep it private? Why—? You know, you—

Amanda Knox: Good question. Because there are bigger—

John Moe: Why am I watching this on Hulu? *(Chuckles.)*

Amanda Knox: Yeah! There are bigger implications, right? Like, what I was going through is a microcosm of what anyone who is going through the criminal justice system is experiencing, hat anyone who is being wrongly accused is experiencing. They're— Like, one of the things that was really important for me to show in this documentary is that there is a history of law enforcement and prosecutors and those we entrust with holding people accountable for crimes not taking accountability for their crimes and their misconduct.

Like, one of the reasons why Chris interviewed other exonerees and other people who work within the Innocence Movement and made them a part of this documentary was to give context. Like, okay, Amanda's going back to Italy. So what? Like, why would that be—?

Chris Robinson: Yeah. How rare is it for prosecutors to apologize?

Amanda Knox: Right. And what are the stakes? What are the ongoing consequences of judicial injustice?

John Moe: Amanda, it feels like its exposure therapy a lot of times.

(Amanda laughs.)

Which is a legit form of therapy, to go into a controlled version of the thing that is the source of your trauma. I mean, another version of that is in EMDR—you know, a series of remembering things and processing that way. Did you consult experts in exposure therapy?

(Chris chuckles.)

Psychiatrists, psychologists, before you went?

Amanda Knox: No, not at all. Although, one of the things that I've found super surprising is that any psychologist people that I know, when I tell them about some of the things that I did to cope—

[00:35:00]

—either in prison or since coming home—they will point out to me, "Oh my gosh! That's a specific kind of therapy that you just did there!"

And I was like, "Well, I just made it up as I went along. And so, I think—again, I feel like I'm very lucky in that I have a good intuition for the mental gymnastics that can actually help me navigate the world effectively, and remain functional, and also healthy. I think I have a really healthy desire to love people and feel connected to them. And so, I don't put psychological obstacles in my own way, and I'm constantly seeking ways that—like, seeking psychological frameworks that give me permission to feel connected to people, to feel fulfilled, to feel purposeful.

John Moe: I want to talk about you meeting with the prosecutor. First, a short break.

Transition: Spirited acoustic guitar.

Promo:

Music: Funky, upbeat banjo music.

Dan McCoy: *The Flop House* is a podcast where we watch a bad movie, and then we talk about it.

Elliott Kalan: Robert Shaw in *Jaws*, and they're trying to figure out how to get rid of the ghoulies. And he scratches his nails and goes, "I'll get you, ghoulie."

Dan: He's just standing above the toilet with a harpoon. No, I was just looking forward to you going through the other ways in which *Wild Wild West* is historically inaccurate.

Stuart Wellington: You know how much movies cost nowadays?! When you add in your popped corn, and your bagel bites, and your cheese fritters?

Elliott: Sure. You can't go wrong with a Henry Cavill mustache. Here at Henry Cavill Mustaches, the only supplier!

(They laugh.)

Narrator: *The Flop House*. New episodes every Saturday. Find it at MaximumFun.org.

(Music fades out.)

Promo:

Music: Fun, exciting music.

Kirk Hamilton: Say you like video games—

Jason Schreier: And who doesn't?

Maddy Myers: I mean, some people probably don't.

Kirk: Okay, but a lot of people do. So, say you're one of those people, and you feel like you don't really have anyone to talk to about the games that you like.

Jason: Well, you should get some better friends.

Kirk: Yes, you should get some better friends, but you could also listen to *Triple Click. (Click, click, click!)* A weekly podcast about video games hosted by me, Kirk Hamilton.

Maddy: Me, Maddy Myers.

Jason: And me, Jason Schreier. We talk about new releases, old classics, industry news, and whatever, really.

Maddy: We'll show you new things to love about games, and maybe even help you find new friends to talk to about them.

Kirk: *Triple Click. (Click, click, click!)* It's kinda like we're your friends. Find us at MaximumFun.org or wherever you get your podcasts.

(Music fades out.)

Transition: Gentle acoustic guitar.

John Moe: We're talking with Amanda Knox and Chris Robinson. We're talking about *Mouth of the Wolf: Amanda Knox Returns to Italy*. Who's the wolf?

Amanda Knox: Mm. Well, the wolf was my prosecutor. Actually, he's the one who in part inspired— So, I was the one who came up with the title of the film. And it was inspired by the fact that one fun thing that I learned about my prosecutor is that wolves are his favorite animal. Oftentimes when he signs off a letter to me, he'll put a little like wolf emoji down there by his name. So—

John Moe: *(Quiet and shocked.)* Oh. That's fucked up.

Amanda Knox: *(Laughs.)* He's a wolf. He identifies—

Chris Robinson: It's also an iconic animal in the history of Rome and their iconography.

John Moe: Oh, sure. Romulus and Remus.

Amanda Knox: Yeah. Right? It has very different connotations than like Grimm's fairytale vibes. But also, *Mouth of the Wolf* is an expression in Italian. "In bocca al lupo" means— Their way of saying good luck, kind of "break a leg," is "in the

mouth of the wolf." That's what you would say. And he's said it to me in the context of legal things at this point. So, he is— It was a story of me making this journey, which was going directly into the mouth of the wolf: this place that had consumed me. But also, was a nod to that expression of goodwill and good luck. So, it's a sort of play on words.

John Moe: Now, he had said—this prosecutor had said horrible things about you over the course of this whole ordeal, lied about you. Why did you want to meet with him? I mean, were you intending to go to forgive him? Like, what was—? Why would you want to talk to someone like that?

Amanda Knox: Well. *(Chuckles.)* I love that people ask this question, because I do think—and someone pointed this out to me recently—that especially when we've been harmed, there's this tendency to feel—like, there's almost this helpless tendency that we take on in our minds that confrontation is bad and that there's no hope and no use in confronting the people who have harmed us—

[00:40:00]

—the people who have abused us—or in this case, abused their power. They cannot be reasoned with. They are, you know, narcissists; they're malicious. We sort of diagnose them from an armchair. And a lot of people were doing that. You know, that was the background radiation of when I came home and was finally once again immersed in my support system. It was people who were writing off my prosecutor—the architect of this vicious slanderous campaign against me—as an evil person who— He was either incompetent and evil or a coward or any one of these bad names that we can come up for with him. It's just hopeless and useless to entertain a conversation, much less give him the time of day. Like, that's the message that I was getting constantly, and—

John Moe: Well, I think about that too, but I also think about it in terms of personal protection. Like, you know, a bag full of triggers!

Amanda Knox: Yeah, we have boundaries. Yeah, we have—

John Moe: Bag full of triggers!

Amanda Knox: Oh yeah! No, it's a mountain of triggers. Absolutely. And I think that—you know, I say this in the documentary one of the opening images is me just sobbing, because I know—I <u>know</u>—that I can't run away from this horrible thing that was done to me. There's no, like, it ever going away. And so, somehow—intuitively—I understood that the only way to get away from it was to confront it.

I felt like I had this nightmare version of a person in my head haunting me. This person had hurt me for no reason, and I just could not understand why. And I was not satisfied with the narrative that other people were presenting me, which was a very black-and-white "he's a worthless, evil person" narrative. I didn't believe that to be true. I intuitively understood that the vast majority of people wake up believing that they're the good guy and that they're going to do the right thing and that they are justified in doing the things that they do. I know that. Like, I'm smart enough to realize that that is true.

(Stammering slightly.) What that then demands of me, if I'm willing to acknowledge that, is that this person thought he was doing the right thing. And I was tortured by the idea that I could not understand how that was possible. And I could wax philosophical about why that might be, or I could just ask him. I could just ask him, and I could understand him. I wasn't really interested in forgiving him. I wanted to understand him, and I wanted to see what would happen if I approached him not as an adversary but as an open book. If I could get out of this criminal justice system scenario where he immediately sort of felt like he had to debate me, and argue with me, and dig in on his side, and never admit anything, and always argue against everything I said—

Like, you know, we all live in a very polarized world. *(Chuckling.)* I lived a polarized life my entire adult life now, and I'm not interested in a discourse that just goes in circles where nobody can agree on anything. Like, there is reality. And so, I felt like—if I wanted to have a genuine conversation with somebody about reality in the hopes that I could be finally seen for who I am, and I could see another person for who they really are and not a nightmare version of them in my head—I had to be able to acknowledge my hurt and my pain and my rage, but also not let that fear that those things stir in me be what guided me in my decisions and in how I approached this person.

I instead approached them with— I allowed the parts of myself that were going to help me guide me. The curious part of me, the compassionate part of me, the part of me that is always seeking to see the good in people and to find the benefit in the doubt? That is what guided me.

John Moe: How was he, compared to how you expected him to be?

[00:45:00]

How did the reality meet the anticipation?

Amanda Knox: Oh my gosh. So, I had only ever experienced him in the police office and in the courtroom up to this point, right? Like, that's the only time that I

had ever encountered him, when he was in a very official role wearing very official robes, standing up there in court talking about how I had—you know—taunted and tortured Meredith before killing her because of how much of a slut and monster I was. Like, that was my experience of him. *(Chuckles.)* Then he shows up, and he's like just somebody's grandpa wearing a fishing vest. You know? Like, he's still a very like big, imposing person, but his edges had softened—in large part because I had spent two years up to this point corresponding with him and sort of developing a relationship that was not confront— Like, I was there to confront him, but I didn't have a confrontational attitude.

John Moe: Well, I noticed that he said—and this may have been something that got lost in translation, 'cause it is an Italian, but he says, "If I made a mistake, I ask your forgiveness. If I did that, I'm sorry. Truly."

But that almost struck me as less than a clear apology.

(Chris chuckles.)

Like, "Oh, if you're upset, then I'm sorry." *(Chuckles.)* Like, nobody's satisfied with apologies like that. Were you satisfied by it?

Chris Robinson: You don't want "if." Yeah.

Amanda Knox: Yeah, "if" is not a great way to start an apology. But I will say—and I think you have to— Like, I appreciate this, because I know how much it took for him to even get to that place. Like, the Giuliano Mignini that I knew from the courtroom and from the media was a Giuliano Mignini that would never, ever, ever tolerate the slightest whiff of "you made a mistake" or "you could be wrong."

So, for him, it's been years since he was in the courtroom, and maybe he's not thinking about all the horrible things that he said to me. Like, I remember them very clearly, but I think that's interesting that he—in his mind, he's able to sort of revise all that out *(laughs)* and not reflect very deeply on the very things that he said. But like, for him to even go so far as to meet with me in the first place—

John Moe: And hear what you have to say.

Amanda Knox: And to trust, and hear what I have to say, and hold my hand, and care about me as a person— Like, that shows how much he also is a person who is in evolution, and that evolution is spurred by—I think—my approach to him. He never would have reached out to me. He acknowledges that. He's said that publicly. "I never would've reached out to Amanda, but I could not ignore the fact

that she had reached out to me." And that started a process of personal evolution that is still ongoing. Right?

Like, I didn't need him to give me the perfect apology. And in fact, one of the things that I discovered over the course of this is— Like, I felt like I needed him to say certain things for me to be okay, but in the course of going on this journey, I discovered that I had everything I needed. And in fact, I had a lot to give. It was this paradoxical scenario that arose, which was me needing something and discovering that what I needed was to give something, not to get. You know?

John Moe: Yeah. I guess to return to this earlier quote that we talked about—about trauma, that it's not a matter of repairing everything; it's a matter of accepting who you became. Who are you now as a result of that meeting with him after these trips to Italy? Like, after this repair work that you've done, who did you become?

Amanda Knox: Well, in that moment, I became a superhero. *(Laughs.)* Like, I swear, I swear, I have never felt as unstoppable. And I'm not the kind of person who just lives out my days hyperconfident, never second guessing myself.

[00:50:00]

But like, in that moment, I felt completely in tune with the universe. I felt unstoppable. I felt utterly fulfilled. And I felt like I was fully myself. The Daoists talk about how a lot of our feelings of like pain and discomfort is because we are at war with ourselves. We are at war with our true natures. We are at war with reality. And in that moment, I was at peace with myself, and I was so… happy. And, you know, you couldn't get me down. And having realized that, even for a moment in my life, has given me new perspective, has given me new confidence, and has made me I think—I hope—a better partner, and a better mother, and just a better person.

John Moe: Question for both of you. For people tuning into this, what do you hope they get out of it? What do you hope they come away with, after it's over?

Amanda Knox: I think a similar sense that there is— If you approach life, and especially life's difficulties—and manmade manufactured injustices—from a place of curiosity instead of terror? It is remarkable what you can accomplish. I have been so beaten down and diminished and made small in my life. And I did not accept that. And the process of finding my way back into my power was long and hard, but it is possible. And so, all of these hard truths that I discovered about reclaiming a sense of purpose and agency and fulfillment in my life are things that I want to share with people.

And I hope people come away from the documentary feeling more optimistic about themselves and about the world, and challenging themselves to realize like "what am I capable of? Like, you know, how am I holding myself back?"

Chris Robinson: And what are my supposed adversaries capable of? Like, we're living in a really polarized, divided time. And it seems like no matter which side of various issues you're on, there's a bunch of people on the other side that seem unreachable, that seem like they're living in a different universe. And you know, there's no greater gap between realities I think than "I'm innocent" and "I think you're a monster who belongs in prison." Like, that's where Amanda started this journey. That was the other universe that this guy was living in. And she was able to build a bridge to that universe and to that man, because she didn't treat him like the worst—you know, as an example of the worst behavior he had ever done. She didn't box him into the worst thing he had ever done to her.

She said, "You know, I'm gonna give this guy the benefit of the doubt he doesn't deserve, and I'm gonna treat him as if he were a person who had already done noble things and see if he can step into that role." And I think that's an example I hope people take away from this: that if you look at the people that you think are your enemies, and you give them the benefit of the doubt you don't think they deserve, they might surprise you. And they might not get all the way to being friends. I don't even know that "friend" is a good term for what Amanda and her prosecutor are right now. But they're not enemies anymore.

John Moe: *Mouth of the Wolf: Amanda Knox Returns to Italy* is on Hulu now. Amanda Knox and Chris Robinson, thanks so much.

Amanda Knox: Thank you so much.

Chris Robinson: Thank you for having us.

Music: "Building Wings" by Rhett Miller, an up-tempo acoustic guitar song. The music continues quietly under the dialogue.

John Moe: Hey. So, a lot of people have been paying attention to our show lately and paying attention to the some of the things that I've had to say about life in Minnesota during all this. We love that people are listening. We love that people are hearing what we have to say. I love it. You know, when I write and people read that, that's very gratifying. All of this—all of our efforts to make the show, to get it out into the world—they do cost money. It's significant. And we need donations from people in order to exist. That's how we make a living doing this. That's how we can keep doing it.

If you've already donated to the show, thank you so much. If you haven't, it's so easy. You just go to MaximumFun.org/join.

[00:55:00]

You can join at $5 a month or up—$10, $20, whatever makes sense for you. It's just really important. If we want to keep this going, if we want to keep helping people, if we want to keep bringing you these stories, we need to hear from you. MaximumFun.org/join. Be sure to hit subscribe. Give us five stars, write rave reviews. That gets the show out to the world.

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline can be reached in the US and Canada by calling or texting 988. It's free. It's available 24/7.

We're on BlueSky at @DepreshMode. Our Instagram is @DepreshPod. Our newsletter is on Substack. Search up John Moe or *Depresh Mode*. You'll find it. I'm on BlueSky and Instagram at @JohnMoe. Join our Preshies group on Facebook. That's for people who listen to the show. And they talk about their lives, and they talk about mental health, and they sometimes talk about the show, and there's a lot of pictures of pets. *(Chuckles.)* I'm there too. Just find Facebook and search up Preshies and join us. Our electric mail address is DepreshMode@MaximumFun.org.

Hi, credits listeners. Everything that's been happening in Minnesota lately has sort of taken my mind off how cold it is in January in Minnesota every year. It was -22 the other morning, but I didn't even think about it, 'cause I had so many other things on my mind. It's kind of a relief to not have to think about those temperatures. But I wish it was for a different reason.

Depresh Mode is made possible by your contributions. Our production team includes Raghu Manavalan, Kevin Ferguson, and me. We get booking help from Mara Davis. Mr. Rhett Miller wrote and performed our theme song, "Building Wings". *Depresh Mode* is a production of Maximum Fun and Poputchik. I'm John Moe. Bye now.

Music:

I'm always falling off of cliffs, now

Building wings on the way down

I am figuring things out

Building wings, building wings, building wings

No one knows the reason

Maybe there's no reason

I just keep believing

No one knows the answer

Maybe there's no answer

I just keep on dancing

(Music fades out.)

Kyle: Hey. Hi, hello. This is Kyle, live from the internet. Tomorrow always has a chance at being better than today, and that chance is always worth taking.

(Music fades out.)

Transition: Cheerful ukulele chord.

Speaker 1: Maximum Fun.

Speaker 2: A worker-owned network.

Speaker 3: Of artist owned shows.

Speaker 4: Supported—

Speaker 5: —directly—

Speaker 6: —by you!