

FULL LENGTH: 3 White Guys Named John

SOUND CUE: INTRO MUSIC - LIVING ON A PRAYER 0:22 - 0:47 (fade out)

IMAGE: 3 JOHNS

3 White Guys Named John. Why 3 White Guys Named John? Why that title? Why not 3 White Girls Named Jane?

IMAGE: 3 WHITE JANES

A show about how Jane Goodall, Jane Fonda and Jane Seymour changed my life with their research, activism and acting performances? Or rather 3 Black Guys Named John.

IMAGE: 3 BLACK JOHNS

About how John Singleton, John Legend and John Boyega changed my life with their movies and music?

Why John at all? What's so special about that name? John means gracious (kind, courteous). Which is sweet but not noteworthy really.

My dad's name is Augustus. Now that's a name. Augustus means majestic, increaser, great. It was the name given to the Rulers of the Roman Empire. Why not write a show about 3 Augustuses?

IMAGE: 3 AUGUSTUSES

Because this isn't a show about the most famous or the most popular or the most majestic it's about three very specific people that appeared to me and they just all happened to be three white guys named John.

Let me explain.

You know how there is a long and storied tradition of spirits, ghosts if you will, appearing to a hero to help them make better choices? I think it started with Charles Dickens' book A Christmas Carroll. The main character Ebenezer Scrooge is going about life all wrong and then three ghosts appear to him showing his past present and future. Afterwards he changes his ways and takes the right path.

It's repeated in film often, Bill Murray in Scrooged. Jimmy Stewart in It's a Wonderful Life.

I've also clocked how in the Bible angels would appear to people. Like how the angel Gabriel appeared to the virgin Mary. Angels appeared to Joseph and Abraham.

Well, the same thing happened to me. I was visited. Except not by angels, spirits or ghosts.

They were 3 white guys named John.

John Hughes, John Mayer and Jon Bon Jovi. These 3 random albeit famous white guys named John appeared to me.

As far as celestial messengers go, they're not an obvious choice, even for Johns. Why not John The Baptist? Or the Apostle John or John Travolta (he played an angel in a movie once)?

Nonetheless John Hughes, John Mayer and Jon Bon Jovi appeared to me through their work and because they did they changed the course of my entire life.

My first John - John Hughes.

IMAGE: HUGHES 1

John Hughes was a prolific writer and director. He's responsible for: Home Alone, Uncle Buck. Pretty in Pink, The Breakfast Club and Weird Science - just to name a few.

The significance of John Hughes on my life can in no way be over stated. I mainlined his movies as an adolescent. To be clear - I wasn't seeking out John Hughes movies, I didn't even know who he was. It just so happened that when I looked back at the movies that shaped me as an adolescent Andrea, all those movies were made by John Hughes.

John and I have nothing in common. He's from the midwest. I'm from the south. He was an Aquarius. I'm in Aries.

To look at him I would never think "This Baby Boomer knows how it feels to be a pre teen black girl living in Virginia Beach, Virginia."

But he knew. Somehow he knew. He definitely knew because when I watched his movies I felt seen.

IMAGE: UNCLE BUCK

He knew what it felt to be a teenage girl who hates your mother but also really loves your mother. Uncle Buck.

IMAGE: SOME KIND OF WONDERFUL

He knew what it felt like to be really in love with a guy but for that guy to be really in love with someone else and only see you as a friend. Some Kind of Wonderful.

IMAGE: WEIRD SCIENCE 2

He knew what it felt like to be a loser and bullied. To be not cool. Weird Science.

Weird Science, written and directed by John Hughes, was a core movie for me. It came out in 1985. It's about these two friends Gary and Wyatt. They're losers, uncool and being bullied. One night they make a woman, Lisa, with their computer and a Barbie doll, don't focus on the science it doesn't totally track.

She's wild, bad ass, totally rock and roll. She throws a party so Gary and Wyatt can become cool. Everyone is at the party. Then these bad guys, picture characters from a MadMax movie - leather and spikes - these bad guys break into the party and threaten everyone.

Initially, Gary and Wyatt hide in a closet because they're scared. And these people are scary, they're wearing war paint, carrying sawed off shot guns, one of them is being lead around on a leash attached to her neck with spikes. But when the leader of the MadMax bad guys threaten the two girls they like, something in Gary and Wyatt snap. They turn to each other and say:

SOUND CUE: AUDIO_WEIRD SCIENCE 5:50 - 6:08 (fade out)

Gary: Are you ready to die, Wyatt?

Wyatt: Gary, I can't wait to die.

Gary: We are going to kick ass.

Wyatt: Okay! This is war. Hands off the girls. Let's leave the girls outta this. Hands off. Hands off! Now!

And then they do! They kick ass! They stand up to the bad guys and earn the respect of their peers and they get the girls.

This movie is as close to a lullaby as I ever had. I watched this movie every day. From the age of seven to ten. My dad owned it on Beta Max cassette. Which is like a DVD but way before DVD and before VHS.

I'd come home from school and pop it in the Betamax player. I knew every line from every scene. Gary and Wyatt inspired me.

They started off not cool and then they became cool.

In Junior High, I was not cool. Not cool at all. not cool by a long shot. I was a shell of myself. And I was being bullied. By my "best friend." Anyone else have a friend that was really mean to you? Well, I did, her name was Crystal.

Let me tell you some of Crystal's greatest hits:

- She kissed the boy I liked after I told her I liked him
- She locked me in a room to force me to watch "Flowers in the Attic" a movie she knew I was scared of and kept me in that room by physical force for half an hour
- And she threw a baseball at full speed and with full strength at my face ON PURPOSE giving me a busted bloody and swollen lip. My mouth was misshapen and disfigured for several weeks after.

I was friends with her because I didn't have anyone else.

Elementary school had been great, I had real friends who were nice and there were no hierarchies.

But in Junior High suddenly there were cheerleaders and football players and lunch tables. And some lunch tables were cool and some were not. In my lunch period the only person I knew from elementary school was Crystal. So at lunch I could either sit alone or sit with her.

I chose to sit with her and the price I paid for that was violence.

Crystal's one redeeming quality was her parent's extensive VHS collection. She owned the movie "Ferris Bueller's Day Off," written and directed by John Hughes. Almost every time I went to her house I watched it.

IMAGE: FERRIS BUELLER

Ferris Bueller's Day off is about a high school kid named Ferris who skips school one day and goes on an adventure through Chicago with his girlfriend Sloane and best friend Cameron.

The character who had the biggest effect on me was Cameron. When we first meet Cameron he is this passive, sickly, scared high school student. Cameron's dad bullies him and is mean to him. This person who was supposed to love Cameron the most treated him the worst.

I related to that. Not that Crystal was supposed to *love me the most* but she shouldn't delight in my pain - yet she did.

They take Cameron's Dad's cherry red vintage Ferrari out without permission on their Chicago adventure.

At the end of the day when they return the car, they realize that they can't turn back the miles on the odometer like they thought they could so it will be obvious to Cameron's dad that the car was taken out.

Cameron knows he's going to get in serious trouble and something in him snaps.

SOUND CUE: CAMERON 2:37 - 3:18

Cameron: My old man pushes me around. I never say anything! Well, he's not the problem. I'm the problem. I gotta take a stand. I gotta take a stand against him. I am not gonna sit on my ass as the events that affect me unfold to determine the course of my life. I'm going to take a stand.

Then Cameron starts kicking the Ferrari, over and over. And then the Ferrari accidentally falls out of their high rise garage onto the ground below and gets completely destroyed.

Ferris quickly offers to take the blame.

But Cameron says no, I'll take it. I'll take the heat. When my dad gets home, we'll have a little talk.

My heart swells every time I watch that scene. I knew how scared Cameron was of his dad because that's how afraid I was of Crystal.

And so it was, week after week, month after month for 2 years of Junior High I watched Cameron take a stand.

Ninth grade starts, high school, and once again the only person I knew in my lunch period was Crystal.

Now, in this new school there was a girl that I'd clocked who was an even bigger bully than Crystal. Let's call her Ursula.

As we know, Crystal would perform localized acts violence against me. -

But Ursula, Ursula was on a whole other level. Ursula was the type of bully who would fight you in the middle of the lunch room in front of the teachers. She didn't care!

One day in the first week of high school Crystal and I are sitting at lunch and Ursula saunters over to us. My stomach drops.

I could feel that Crystal was scared too. Which was weird. I'd never experienced Crystal afraid before.

Ursula says "Hey, can I look in your purses?"

For those who don't know, a 9th grade girls pocketbook is sacred. We have all types of mysteries and wonders in there: lipgloss, nail polish, secret notes, purple erasers shaped like stars that smell like bubblegum. One does not look in a 9th grade girl's purse.

And to add insult to injury she "asked" - as if we really had a choice.

Which we did not.

What she was really saying is - "Give me your fucking purse now or I'm gonna beat the shit out of you right here in front of the Environmental Science teacher."

Crystal handed over her purse almost immediately.

Ursula took it and started looking through it taking things out turning them over. smirking at the contents. It was humiliating.

She returned Crystal's purse.

Then sets her eyes on me.

But something had shifted in me from the hours and months of watching and rewatching Cameron take a stand. From watching Gary and Wyatt take a stand.

I knew Ursula could surely kill me. But I was sick of it. I was sick of Ursula and I was sick of Crystal.

I was not gonna sit on my ass as the events that affected me unfolded to determine the course of my life. It was time for me to take a stand.

And I could not wait to die.

Ursula asked again for my purse.

“No,” I said. “You can’t have it.”

I waited for the punch.

I could see something shift in her eyes. An understanding perhaps.

“Ok.” She said, then turned on her heel and walked away.

Holy shit. She didn’t kill me.

I looked at Crystal in amazement. Immediately, I felt almost sorry for her. She couldn’t even stand up to Ursula and I just did.

My life changed after that. First of all, I stopped sitting with Crystal at lunch.

Then I ran for Freshman Class President. I ran against the popular girls. And I won.

Weeks later I was nominated for then elected to the homecoming court. I got to ride on a float during the halftime show with the popular kids.

High School opened up for me - I was junior class president, the lead in the school plays. Senior year, I was voted the Most Talented Senior Girl.

I’d graduated from being the John Hughes loser at the beginning of the movie to being the John Hughes hero at the end.

It only took me about 5 years, 372 viewings of Ferris Bueller’s Day Off and 1,000 viewings of “Weird Science” to get me there - but I got there.

Thanks to John Hughes.

IMAGE: HUGHES 1

I must acknowledge here that I am aware that there are no black women in John Hughes movies. No black people at all actually. I mean sure yes in the crowd scenes there are black people peppered in his movies. Flipping around. Seriously there are black people doing back flips in “Ferris Bueller’s Day Off.”

The school nurse in “Ferris Bueller’s Day Off” is black. In Weir Science Gary and Wyatt go to a blues club and there are black people there that they hang out and drink with.

So there are a few. What I mean to say is, the heroes aren’t black. The villains aren’t black either by the way (thank you for that John). But the person with whom we take the journey is not a black person.

I bring it up because I get that it may seem odd that I’m so inspired by white men. Maybe you don’t think it’s odd but I kinda do. At the very least it’s surprising. You’d think I would need a character just like me to do the thing in order to know I could do it. Perhaps it’s a product of the time when I grew up, the 1980s. There weren’t a lot of teen movies with black leads so I was used to not seeing myself.

But I have to say I did see myself in those characters. No, I don’t look like Molly Ringwald or Anthony Michael Hall but I have the same fears and pain that they have. That’s all I cared about. I identified with them. Not on a physical level but on an emotional level. It could be odd that I look at Gary, Wyatt and Cameron and see myself but it doesn’t change the fact that it’s true. I’m just telling the truth.

And of course, I do want black representation in entertainment, it’s happening and please bring on more. I’m not saying it’s not needed or appreciated or wanted. I’m just observing that when I didn’t have it, I still got something from John’s movies. I got a lot.

On that note, As much as I love John Hughes, and I do love John Hughes, I have to admit that he’s broken my heart before. One of my favorite John Hughes movies is Uncle Buck. One of the sub plots is how much the mother and the teenage daughter in that movie don’t get along.

There's this epic scene involving them at the end. Spoiler alert - I'm going to ruin the end of the movie for you. It came out 35 years ago so if you haven't seen it yet then that is on you.

So the whole movie the daughter has just been full of anger and vitriol at her mother. The parents have been away for a couple weeks. The mom returns home walking into the house and the daughter is standing in the entryway alone with a scowl on her face.

The mom kind of visibly braces herself for another onslaught of coldness from her daughter. And we as the audience do too because that's what has been happening for the entire film.

But then the daughter out of nowhere inexplicably takes her arms and wraps them around her mother giving her this huge hug. The mom is startled, we the audience are startled. A hug? An embrace? Really?

And then there's this huge release. The daughter cries in her mother's arms and her mother cradles her head. It's beautiful.

For me it was cathartic and transformative.

At that time in my life my mother and I were not getting along and watching this I saw that I wasn't alone. And I also saw that there would come a day when we would embrace each other again.

The first time I watched that scene I sobbed. It felt like John Hughes had beautifully painted the nuance and intricacy of what it feels like to be a teenage girl with a mother. And how complicated it is and how you can hate her one minute and love her the next.

Years later they came out with the director's commentary of that movie and I was so excited to get it home so I could listen to what John Hughes had to say about that scene. I thought maybe he's going to have more insight to show me how to get along with my mom.

I listened to it and his accounting of that scene was for me, awful. It felt like a betrayal. He talked about mothers and daughters in this 1 dimensional way almost dismissive and insulting. Like: ***I had 3 sisters and they were always arguing with my mom. It never made sense to me. They were really annoying.*** I was shocked.

How could this be the same person who wrote that scene? In the movie he treated the reconciliation of the mom and the daughter as the major triumph of the film.

I thought John Hughes understood me and the pain of feeling disconnected from your mother but he just thinks I'm annoying.

Listening to the commentary I felt ashamed. I felt like a fool for being uplifted by that moment.

What was going on?? When he recorded the audio commentary was he just having a bad day? Or was he an ass?

It bothered me for a long time. This is what I came to:

Maybe he's both. Maybe he has compassion for the nuances and intricacies of mother daughter relating AND is annoyed by it. Maybe John Hughes contains multitudes.

Just like me. I've already admitted I love my mother and I hate her sometimes, she can be really annoying. I also contain multitudes. Could it be that John Hughes and I are just alike?

I still watch Uncle Buck and I still watch that scene and I cry every time. I relate not only to the movie but apparently to the man who wrote it.

My second John - John Mayer.

IMAGE: MAYER 1

He's a singer songwriter guitarist known for the songs Daughters, Say, Your Body is a Wonderland. He's won 7 grammys and sold 17 million albums worldwide.

No one had a bigger impact on my adolescence than John Hughes. And no one had a bigger impact on my early adulthood than John Mayer.

John Mayer's first studio album came out while I was in law school.

I was a hesitant law student. Which is to say I didn't really want to go to law school. But it was a top 20 law school and they'd offered me quite a bit of money to go.

I'd wanted to go to an acting conservatory, become a full time performer. But I wasn't sure. It seemed risky.

But when I heard John Mayer's album it was like someone had set the words of my heart to music. The resonance of John's music to my soul cannot be overstated. Almost every lyric felt like it could've been written by me.

Which feels shocking and embarrassing to say because he's nothing like me. He's 6'3 I'm 5'2. He's a Libra. I'm an Aries. He grew up in the North, me in the south.

But The first time I heard his song "No Such Thing" my heart stopped.

SOUND CUE: No Such Thing 0:44 - 1:20 (fade out)

They love to tell you

Stay inside the lines

But something's better

On the other side

I wanna run through the halls of my high school

I wanna scream at the top of my lungs

I just found out there's no such thing as the real world

Just a lie you've got to rise above

This is me - I don't want to stay inside the lines. What am I doing at law school? I was interviewing at law firms, wearing gray suits, sensible shoes and talking about land redistribution.

The more I listened to this song the more I knew I wasn't where I was supposed to be.

The second song on that album was my anthem: Why Georgia.

SOUND CUE: WHY GEORGIA 0:49 - 1:29 (fade out)

Cause I wonder sometimes

About the outcome

Of a still verdictless life

Am I living it right?

Am I living it right?

Am I living it right?

Why, why Georgia, why?

John had dropped out of college, to pursue a career in music. He'd moved to Atlanta, Georgia and was filled with doubt.

Hence the lyric - Am I living it right?

It was a question that I asked myself every day when I was in law school.

Clearly the answer for me was no. I was not living my life right. So while interviewing for law firm jobs I'd also applied to work as an actor at some theaters companies.

It was a wild and crazy proposition to be sure. No one in my law school was working on headshots and acting resumes. Finding and practicing comedic Shakespeare monologues. But I had to try. Because John kept asking me, was I living my life right and I knew the answer was no.

Through my efforts I'd been offered a year long acting job at a Shakespeare Theater company in Orlando Florida. I was elated.

I'd also been offered a job working at the Law Department for the City of Chicago.

In Chicago, I could've done law during the day and performance stuff at night. That's what a lot of my friends did. But there was John's refrain dancing in my head -

Am I living it right? Am I living it right.

So I turned down the law job and accepted the full time acting job in Florida.

Upon graduation from law school, my plan was to drive from Virginia to Orlando to begin this insane life I'd chosen for myself. My mom had offered to make the drive with me. It's about 11 hours.

Halfway into the trip I panic.

What the fuck am I doing? This is crazy. This is crazy. I'm ruining my life. I'm ruining everything.

Driving through South Carolina I began to spiral. I was now certain that I was doing the wrong thing. I look over to the passenger seat to get support from my mom and she was — asleep. Great.

Should I wake her up? No, I love my mom but she doesn't know if this is the wrong decision. Even if she said I was doing the right thing I wouldn't believe her. She doesn't have a crystal ball.

Should I turn the car around? Would my mom even notice? I could tell her that I changed my mind. Maybe the City of Chicago law department would take me back.

I felt so alone.

I grew up in a fairly religious family. We went to church on Sundays. We said grace at Thanksgiving. But I wasn't yet at the stage in my life where I reached out to God or the Divine about my actual life. God was in church. And when I left church God stayed there. God was not on Interstate 95. Certainly not within the walls of my 2000 Plymouth Neon.

But then it happened. As my Plymouth Neon rolled across the border of South Carolina into Georgia, in that immediate moment that I saw the Welcome to Georgia sign on the highway - THIS came on the radio.

SOUND CUE: WHY GEORGIA 1:07 - 1:29 (fade out)

Oh my god.

Out of nowhere a random radio station that I'd happened to have on decided to play my anthem, my fight song "Why Georgia" about John's scary move to Georgia while I was making my own scary move to Florida and driving into the state of Georgia.

Tears came to my eyes. This was it. This was the sign. Confirmation that I was doing it right. The Divine, through John Mayer, telling me to keep going.

So I did. I kept driving and made it to Florida. I spent the entire season acting at that theater. It was amazing. I got the lead in the first show.

Then I auditioned for arguably the best Shakespeare Theater in the country - The Shakespeare Theater in Washington, DC. I got in. I was cast in Macbeth and performed alongside Kelly McGillis.

All Thanks to John Mayer.

It feels important to share that in doing this show I'm breaking a promise that I made to myself in 2010. In 2010 I vowed that I would never publicly reveal that I liked, née, loved John Mayer's music. Because in 2010, John Mayer did an interview with Playboy magazine. He was asked why he thought his music was so popular with black people. He didn't answer that question. Instead, he used a racial slur, he said the n word when discussing whether he had a "hood pass."

And he compared his penis to David Duke, who was former grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. Saying that he's not attracted to black women. He said I have quote "a fucking David Duke cock." End quote.

Here's the thing - sometimes your angels make you cry. They just do.

He was so personal to me. I never went to his concerts or tried to meet him. I didn't have posters of him hanging on my wall. But his music had become part of my soul. His music had woven itself into my heart and inspired me to do the impossible and terrifying.

He had meant something to me. And it sounded like I meant nothing to him. Actually worse than nothing, his penis was apparently repulsed by me and black women at large.

I wish I could say that I didn't care. But I did. I think every person struggles with whether they have value. That fear, that sentiment isn't exclusive to black women. White people, asian people, Indian people, we all question or doubt our value sometimes.

I think what's exclusive to black women is why. Historically, American culture has treated black women as though we have no value because of our skin color, our lips, our hair, our curves. Growing up there wasn't much in the media to say otherwise. Most of the love interests were not black women or if they were black they were real real light skinned with thin lips and hair like a white woman's.

I'd navigated the underlying lie that I wasn't valuable or attractive because of my race my entire life as a young girl growing up in Virginia Beach, Virginia. I knew in

my head it wasn't true but because of the power of messaging the lie still lived inside of me.

When this Playboy interview came out I was actually heartbroken. And ashamed. I'd let this man into my soul. His words felt like a betrayal. I felt humiliated. How could I ever tell anyone that this man's music had meant so much to me? That because of him I kept driving that day.

I believe in free speech. The first amendment is actually my favorite of the amendments. Seriously, I like it even more than the 13th amendment about freeing the slaves.

Of course yes I like that the slaves have been freed but the language of the 13th amendment has too many qualifiers. The 13th amendment doesn't actually abolish slavery whole heartedly. The 13th amendment actually allows slavery if the person has been convicted of a crime. It's true, look it up. Slavery is still legal in certain circumstances.

But the First amendment, it's so pure:

Congress shall make no law ... abridging freedom of speech

In 12th grade my senior year book quote was "I may disagree with what you say but I'll defend to the death your right to say it." I've been obsessed with the first amendment for a long time.

All that to say, I didn't want John Mayer arrested for his speech. That's not my style. If he doesn't like black women, ok. It's not a crime. It's bullshit but it's not a crime.

That said, before that interview came out I'd just bought his fourth studio album, Battle Studies. I'd been so excited to open it and listen to it because his lyrics so often mirrored my life journey. But reading the interview, I couldn't open it. I like... I just couldn't.

I kept the CD that way, unopened in the plastic wrapping for years. I stopped listening to his music. It wasn't a decision, I just could never bring myself to press play on his songs. For five years.

Before then hardly a day would go by without me playing one of his songs. So to not listen to his for 5 years? 1,825 days? That for me was a lot.

And then something in me shifted. I don't know what. I woke up one day and had the desire to hear his song "Bigger Than My Body" It's from his second

album, Heavier Things. I loved that song because I'm 5'2 and people always assume I'm docile because I'm short but there's a line in the song, "I'm bigger than my body gives me credit for." I've always felt this way about myself. And once again, John Mayer even though he's 6'3 had phrased what I felt perfectly.

I was sitting alone in a hotel room in Oregon. I took out my phone, opened my music app and pressed play. The song filled my ears.

The first line is: "*This is a call to the colorblind. This is an IOU*"

Talk about prophetic. It's like he wrote me an apology years before he uttered the insult.

*I've shed this skin I've been tripping in
And I've never quite returned*

**MUSIC CUE: JOHN MAYER - BIGGER THAN MY BODY 0:50 - 1:15
(fade out)**

*Someday I'll fly
Someday I'll soar
Someday I'll be
Something much more
'Cause I'm bigger than my body
Gives me credit for*

Tears fell from my eyes.

I don't know who John Mayer the man is. I've never met him. I probably never will.

But I know to me his music is sublime. And I'm taking it back.

John Mayer's music is mine. Besides, I'm the hero of this story, not him. He's just one of my angels.

As I've said before, sometimes your angels make you cry.

My third John - Jon Bon Jovi.

IMAGE: BON JOVI 1

Founder and frontman for the rock group Bon Jovi. A singer songwriter and pretty good actor.

I wouldn't say as a little girl growing up in Virginia Beach Va that I listened to a ton of Bon Jovi. But I'd certainly heard of him.

Jon Bon Jovi rose to prominence in my life when I was in college. I auditioned for and got into my college's improv comedy group. On our way to every show we'd sing songs to hype ourselves up. And almost every time we did this we would sing Living on a Prayer by Bon Jovi. That first semester I barely knew any of the words but I could certainly eek out the chorus:

SOUND CUE: LIVING ON A PRAYER 1:34 - 1:41 (fade)

Whoah, we're half way there

Livin on a prayer

By senior year I could sing living on a prayer backwards, forwards and sideways. Every time I hear that song I think about college and how much I love my improv group.

Other than that, I didn't really pay Jon Bon Jovi any mind.

Then came 2022.

I was living in NYC and working as a lawyer. After working in Florida and Washington DC as an actor, I moved to NY to start auditioning here. I was lawyering during the day and performing at night. It wasn't a bad life. I had highs and lows. But my old Johns haunted me.

Hughes and Mayer. I knew that I wasn't "living it right." I knew that once again my life was like a John Hughes character at the beginning of the movie and not the John Hughes character at their triumphant end.

I had a feeling I needed to quit my job at the law firm. But I'd been practicing law for almost 17 years at that point. I had a pension. I had a 401K. I had safety. I had security.

I'd had some success as a performer too - my picture had been in the NY Times, I'd been featured on NPR, PBS been on tv a few times.

But you know how it is. You know. We all know when we're not really doing the thing we're supposed to do.

One night I went for a walk in the park next to my apartment in Brooklyn.

I felt bereft. My lawyer job was draining me. Emotionally and physically. But who quits a good job?

I had money saved but was I supposed to use it to support myself while I fully invested in my dreams of being a writer performer?

It felt selfish to quit. Maybe Divine wanted me to stay at my job and suffer? Seriously, there are lot of suffering people in the Bible.

I sat on a bench in the park and asked the Divine, What should I do? I didn't really expect an answer.

Then out of nowhere a man rode his moped through the park carrying a boom box. Playing this:

SOUND CUE: IT'S MY LIFE 0:32 - 0:51

It's my life

It's now or never

I ain't gonna live forever

I just wanna live while I'm alive

(It's my life)

My heart is like an open highway

Like Frankie said, I did it my way

I just wanna live while I'm alive

It's my life

And then as suddenly as this man appeared, he was gone, riding off into the night.

Holy shit. Holy shit.

Immediately I knew 2 things:

Number 1 - that was a Jon Bon Jovi song

Number 2 - Divine was telling me that I had the green light to quit. I wasn't going to live forever. It was my life.

That I had every right to want to live while I was alive.

I was dumbfounded. I'd been given an answer and it was clear.

But I couldn't do it. I was scared.

I stood up and I walked back to the apartment that I shared with my man. And I told him nothing about what happened in the park.

As the days past it seemed easier to dismiss the whole occurrence as coincidence. Even though nothing like that had ever happened before.

People didn't ride mopeds through that park holding boom boxes playing Bon Jovi. Nobody had ever ridden through that park playing anything.

I live in a predominately black neighborhood if they were going to play something it certainly wouldn't be a 20 year old Bon Jovi song. The whole thing was just bizarre.

That said, I stayed at my job.

But my desire to leave amped up. A year later it had reached an almost fever pitch. My man hated what my job was doing to me.

I was crying a lot. I was getting rashes. It was almost like after 17 years my body was rejecting the job.

My man wanted me to quit. He had income, I had money saved. On paper, we could do this.

But in my head it sounded insane.

What even would that look like? Depend on my man financially. Leave the safety and security of my job. People in my family didn't leave perfectly good jobs.

My mom grew up poor with 12 brothers and sisters. My dad grew up poor too, he didn't even have a bathroom in his house growing up. They used an outhouse.

My mom worked for the government for almost 37 years before retiring. My dad just retired at 74 from being a high school teacher.

Where did I get off quitting a job?

My grandmother Rosa is my favorite grandmother. She's my dad's mom. I spent a lot of time with her growing up. She was short like me and opinionated. Like myself and John Mayer she was bigger than her body gives her credit for.

She had a 12th grade education. She was a high school graduate in the 1930s. A poor black woman in the south with high school diploma was rare then. And you know what she did for a living? She washed white people's clothes. She was smart and capable. Yet she worked at a job way below her ability and skill level. because of racism and sexism.

When I was working as an actor in Florida I didn't always just act on stage. I was employed by the theater. So sometimes I helped out in other departments of the theater. For example, for one of the shows I worked in the costume department and my job was to clean the costumes of every actor in that play. And all those actors were white.

I had a juris doctorate and I, like my grandmother, was essentially washing white people's clothes for a living.

Cleaning someone's clothes is honest work and yes I wasn't washing clothes at that theater because of racism and sexism. But the parallels were glaring to me.

Part of me thought, even though I hate working at this law firm at least I'm working at my skill and education level.

But deep down I knew, my grandmother wouldn't want me to stay at a job I hated just because I was intellectually capable of doing it. That wasn't the legacy she left for me.

One night a year later while we were alone in our apartment. I finally told my man about the guy in the park, the boombox and the Bon Jovi.

My man said - Are you serious? Why didn't you tell me?
I don't know I said. So many reasons.

That same night, barely an hour later while we sat in our living room, in the same seats we were in when I told him about the night in the park - someone drove past our building BLASTING this on their car radio.

SOUND CUE: IT'S MY LIFE 0:32 - 0:51

My man and I jolted up wide eyed looking at each other.

Did you hear it? I said.

I heard it! he said,

It was the same stanza, the exact same lines that I heard that night in the park.

A month later I put in my notice.

It was just before Christmas.

We went home to see my parents in Virginia for the holidays. After our flight back I stood in La Guardia waiting for our Lyft wondering if I'd made the right decision by quitting. My official last day wasn't for another week. Maybe I could tell my job that I changed my mind.

At that moment a little girl ran past me in the airport. She was maybe 2 years old.

She was wearing a jean jacket. Her jean jacket was bedazzled.

The following words were bedazzled on the back of this 2 year old girl's jean jacket?

- It's My Life - the name of the Jon Bon Jovi song that was playing in the park and on the street was now on this little girl's jacket.

Three times Bon Jovi appeared to me.

Yes, Divine was saying, I made the right decision. My last day was January 5, 2024.

It only took me 2 years and 3 visits from Bon Jovi to get me there but I got there. Thank you Jon.

I have to acknowledge the abundance of white guys named John appearances in my life. It's been epic..

I'd be lying if I didn't share that a part of me wishes this show were called 3 black girls named Tina.

IMAGE: 3 TINA'S

About how Tina Turner, Tina Knowles and Tina Campbell changed my life.

Part of me is a little ashamed that my three messengers are white men. What does that say about me?

I have an abundance of black women in my life so on some level black women are my norm.

I've been taught that the Divine is the best storyteller and a good story surprises you. White men appearing in my life as celestial messengers - very very surprising. Definitely a twist.

So as a storytelling device, it's a good choice. That could be the answer right there - Maybe the Divine just wanted to tell a good story with my life. If that's the case then I feel pretty good about it.

I am an admirer of Mother Teresa. Mother Teresa was a Catholic nun. She tended to the poor and sick in Calcutta. She opened a hospice for those with leprosy. Her work helped those with AIDS, orphans and those without homes. She was later made a Saint by the Catholic Church.

According to her private letters she rarely if ever felt the presence of the Divine in her life. She often felt alone. She would ask God for answers and would get nothing back. She called it a darkness.

In a letter to a Reverend she wrote:

Jesus has a very special love for you. As for me - The silence and the emptiness is so great - that I look and do not see, - Listen and do not hear.

She was doing all this amazing work devoting her life to service. But according to her, the Divine was communicating nothing back to her.

But me? I got 3 Bon Jovi appearances exactly when I needed them!

What makes me so special? Nothing really. I don't know why I get the music and the movies and Mother Teresa gets nothing.

Maybe if she'd taken a break from the hospital and turned on Netflix she would've gotten some angelic signals.. Perhaps Divine only speaks in pop culture references.

Or maybe Mother Theresa didn't need any course correction. Maybe she was going in the right direction and didn't need an angel to swoop in and put her on her path. Like I did.

I don't know how it works. I just know, I am grateful for these messengers.

IMAGE: 3 JOHNS

My 3 Johns. John Hughes, John Mayer and John Bon Jovi. My three angels.

They're not perfect. Sometimes they make me cry. Sometimes they break my heart. But I think that's part of it - maybe I needed to love something imperfect. They were my angels and they did their job. Maybe their job wasn't to just deliver the message to stand up for myself and be brave. Maybe their job was also to say that I can be an angel for someone even if I'm imperfect.

Which is such a relief for me as another imperfect artist in the world.

My only regret is how long it took me to listen to them.

To act on the music and the movies they gave me.

In some instances it took me years

I think I could've saved myself a lot of pain.

I wonder dear audience is there a song or a movie that that keeps appearing to you? That plays in your heart?

Perhaps you should listen to it. And act. It's up to you.

I hope it doesn't take you as long as it took me.

SOUND CUE: OUTRO SONG: IT'S MY LIFE 0:31 - 1:27