

AN INTERVIEW WITH DANNY RAY CLUFF

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This is December eighth, 2017. This is Claytee White and I'm with Danny in his home in Henderson.

Danny, how are you today?

I'm doing good. How are you?

I'm wonderful. Danny, could you pronounce and spell your full name for me?

Danny Ray Cluff; D-A-N-N-Y, R-A-Y, C-L-U-F-F.

Thank you so much. Danny, let's start by just talking about—right now we're in Henderson. Tell me where you grew up.

In Henderson, born and raised, twenty-nine years.

Twenty-nine years old. Where did you go to school?

High school, Basic, Basic High School.

Fantastic. Then you started working in the gaming industry right away?

No. My first job I was working at Food 4 Less that's on Boulder Highway and then I worked in the mall; that was when I was like fifteen, sixteen and seventeen. Then I was a waiter for a while and then I worked a couple of different jobs for the gaming industry, well, for the hotels.

How long have you been with MGM?

MGM, I've been there now four years, I believe four years, yes.

Let's say that you would go to work tomorrow for somebody else, Caesars, do you still stay in the same retirement program and everything? Does it transfer?

I'm not sure about retirement with that. I have a pension through MGM through my union.

Through the union, okay. So as long as you continued to stay with the union that would continue?

Yes, I believe so.

Good. Have you attended one of the festivals before, Route 91?

Yes, I went to Route 91 the year before; that was my first time going to Route 91. I go to concerts a lot and I'm big into country music. I love Route 91. I've been to Stagecoach; all those types of events are something I like to go to.

Do you also go to National Finals Rodeo's events?

I've been to smaller rodeos. I haven't been to an NFR yet. I really would like to, so that's definitely something I would like to go to, hopefully soon.

Would you consider being in that crowd this year?

I try to think of it as all the different events that I have been, like the ratio compared to the one event that happened; I try to keep that in mind. I went to hundreds of different events and one of them went really bad, but I just try to keep that in perspective. Yes, I'm different now. I'll look at exit strategies and exit signs and where I'm sitting or be more cautious, but I still don't want it to stop my life because of it.

That's great. I admire that. Tell me how you decided to go to the festival this year, events leading up to your decision.

After I went to the one last year, it was going to happen; I was like, *I've got to go*. So once they announced it, the day that they announced it, I got the days off from work; I put it in months ahead of time. I got a room at the Luxor. Even though I live here and stay here, I'm like, *I'm going to do this event right; I'm going to stay at the Luxor, walk across the street, go to the event and walk back to the hotel*. So I planned it all. The week before I was texting my friend who was coming with me, "I can't wait; I'm excited." So it was going to happen, for sure.

Where did you find yourself on, let's say, Friday night? Tell me about going into the event on Friday night.

Friday we went to the hotel and then had a couple of drinks at the hotel, walked across the street. I have friends in the radio business and the radio stations, so we pretty much stayed with them the entire time and kind of hung out where the media thing was; it was towards the left of the stage. We just were hanging out with them pretty much the whole time.

So this is up front to the left away from the Luxor?

Yes.

Were you in the same place on Sunday night?

Actually no, unfortunately. Sunday night, my friend from the radio also does the Golden Knights, so he wasn't there; I was with his wife and her friends. They were tired, so they went to the VIP section. Then I brought my nephew; I brought him with us that day. I got to get him some bracelets. He wanted to go by the stage, so we went towards the middle of Jake Owens set and we started edging closer and closer to the stage. So whenever everything happened we were right by the stage, the right side, like close to Mandalay Bay. We were actually where a lot of the things went down.

How old is your nephew?

He's eighteen. He just walked in the door.

Oh, okay. Was it his first festival?

Yes, and that was his only day he went. He had a good time throughout all of it. We actually split up at the end of it, so he actually got out of there way faster than I did. He was at home by eleven o'clock. I didn't get home until three o'clock in the morning.

How did he do that?

Him and his girlfriend were there and he was kind of focused on her. He got up. He ran a different way. He found somebody who was loading up their car with just anybody and just

drove out of there while I kind of got trampled a little bit and then got up and I went a different way.

Tell me the way you went.

I was by the gate like where the media goes and they have the camera people go and take pictures, to get away from the crowds so they can take pictures of everybody up on stage. So when everything happened there was a guy that was sitting behind me, like taking cover behind the gate, and I was trying to get up to go that way, and he was telling us to get down. I was yelling at him, like, "No." I know it was coming from the right. I didn't know where. I didn't know it was up top, but I knew it was coming from Las Vegas Boulevard area.

It's a solid metal gate, so I was like, "Let us get behind that; that's cover; let us get behind that." So he finally let us go. So I ran that way, helped my friend over the gate, helped some other ladies over the gate, and then I started climbing the gate. He started shooting again, so I ended up falling off the gate. I hit my back so hard that I knocked the breath out of myself and I didn't even realize it. I just called to my friend. Every time I heard shots, I kind of grabbed her and kind of put my back towards Las Vegas Boulevard just in case anything happened it would hit me and not her. Then we went behind the stage and took cover, the sound stage, not the actual stage, but the sound stage.

Where is the sound stage?

It was right to our left. If you're facing the stage, in the middle of the stage there's a little walkway where the artists can come out a little bit into the crowd and there's a straight gate and the sound booth is right in front of it, like a big old black box area, so we went and we hid behind that. Then when he stopped shooting again, I got up to try to run, realized that I knocked the breath out of myself. I didn't even put anything together. Everything was rushing. My first

instinct was actually that I was shot. So I was trying to tell her to go, just go, and she kept coming back and grabbing me and pulling me and making sure I got out of there, too.

We ran out towards some porta-potty area. If you're looking at the stage in the middle of everything, it's to the left and there was a little refill station for water and there was kind of like a little exit right there. So we ran out that way and then went behind Tropicana and Hooters and hopped a gate there and ran and ended up taking cover at Hooters for a while.

At Hooters is that where you met the Kings?

No. I actually met the Kings—I write poetry and I write a lot of poetry for what happened. I had a friend of mine named Mike, he's Jake Owens's bus driver, and he invited me one night. He wanted to meet me and have me meet a couple of friends who I'm actually really good friends with them, too, now. He invited me to Stoney's one night, so I went. First I went to Yard House and I had a couple of beers with him and then we went to Stoney's and they had this little event for everything. Billy and Kim, the Kings, were talking about what happened and how he got shot. So when he got off the stage, I was like, *a lot of people are probably going to go talk to them, kind of rush them, so I'm just going to leave them alone; I don't want to go through that right now. I went through it all and I didn't get shot, so I don't want to go and bombard somebody.* So I decided to let them go.

Ironically, the next day—me and him both work for MGM, so MGM had this tribute thing, so they invited both of us. When I walked out I saw him and Kim. I was like, "Hey, you guys were at Stoney's last night." We had started talking about how we were both there. Then we went to dinner together and now we're all close.

Wonderful. Tell me about the MGM tribute, what it was like. Where did they hold it?

They held it at the Monte Carlo, the Park Theater. It was just an MGM tribute.

What did you expect from the MGM?

What I expected was we're going to go there and then they're going to talk about the people who passed away and what happened at the event and everything like that and how this city was affected. It was not what I expected. It's probably not a good idea for me to talk about my thoughts on that.

You worked at the MGM for four years.

Yes.

What do you do there?

I'm a warehouse attendant for MGM Grand Hotel.

What does that mean?

We're pretty much the heart of MGM. Anything that comes through for the restaurants and the bars and the retail stores and everything, they come through us through trucks. We unload the trucks, we put them in our warehouse, and then the restaurants will give us orders or the bars will give us orders, retail stores give us orders. We pull them, put them on the pallets, and then we send them out to stock all the bars and restaurants and everything. So we make sure they all get what they need and what they want.

All of the MGM properties?

No, we're just for MGM. We have another warehouse that does liquor for all the other hotels and the properties, but we're just the MGM's warehouse, just for the actual MGM Hotel.

What did you learn about yourself that night?

That I'm not where I want to be in life. You kind of start thinking about—people always tell you tomorrow is never promised. Well, that was a harsh reminder. You're safe, though. You think that you're completely safe. You see kids and families and all this stuff, and then a massacre like

that happens, it really makes you think about life—well, not everybody, but me it definitely did. So I was thinking, *if I passed away today, what stories would be told of me? What would I be to people? Who would be there? What impact did I make on this world?* I was like, *I want to change that. I feel like I'm nothing and I don't want to pass away that way, so I'm going to change what I can and do what I can to better myself as a person, as just a human being, as a role model, as just a person in society. I don't want to be just another name in a thing. I want to do something.*

How are you going to start?

I'm big into writing. Since I started writing about this night—I've been writing for years, but I never really share it, only with people that are close with me. But now that I'm sharing it to everybody that was there and stuff, I'm getting messages all the time about how much I've helped them. I've inspired people to write things themselves. People tell me that—who were shot—saying my poetry has helped me. They've actually asked me—they're going to an event to talk about what happened—can they read my poetry. Stuff like that is really cool to me and it makes me feel real blessed to have something that I've always just thought was an easy thing that I like to do as a little hobby and it turned into a gift that people have used to help themselves, and that makes me go through this a lot better.

Do you have enough for a book?

Most likely, yes, because I've been writing for years and then I have songs. I do a lot of poetry. I'm pretty sure I have enough for a book.

Did you get the name of the person that self-publishes in the library at UNLV? I sent it to Kim.

No, I did not give that.

I want to give that to you before I leave here today. You know that Clark County now has a poet laureate?

No.

I want to put you in touch with a few people before I leave here today because I think you're on the way.

That sounds great. I love to write. I love the challenge of it. You have to pretty much explain a story, write a story and have it short, sweet, make sense, and then the challenge of rhyming and keep it with a melody. It's a great challenge and I just love to do it. I'm happy when I finish one. It honestly doesn't take me that long. Every time someone reads my poetry, they're like, "How long does it take you?" I'm like, "Maybe thirty minutes, twenty minutes." They're like, "This would take me days or weeks, if I could even do it." I mean, that's cool.

Good. You've mentioned the name Jake Owens twice. Who is your favorite artist?

My favorite artist, I wouldn't even know who my favorite artist is.

Who are some of those at the top?

I love—Saturday we saw Sam Hunt. Sam Hunt was awesome. I love Sam Hunt. I was really excited to see Jason Aldean and unfortunately that didn't turn out the way I wanted it to.

Of course not.

Some of my biggest—Brothers Osborne is a big one of mine. They're new, but they're great. I've already seen them three times now. Brett Young is good. I like Lanco. I just love country music. I just love music in general, actually. Music is something...When you go to a concert—in the last four years I've been to like ninety concerts. I'm not even over exaggerating. The thing about music is when you go to a concert, you'll see all races, all different types, all different types of people and they're all under one roof or at one event and everybody is getting along, they just

love the music, and there is no problems. Also, with music, no matter what you go through in life or how you're feeling or if you're going through some type of an event, there is a song for it, which makes you know that you're not alone. So people have obviously felt like. People have always been there. So there's people you can connect with through music. And so music has always been very special to me and I've always loved it since I was a kid and just what it does for the world, music is healing. When people ask me, "You still go to concerts?" Yes, because that's where you see—I saw the worst of the world in it once, but I've seen the best of the world in it at the same time.

Tell me about the atmosphere for this whole festival.

Oh, I mean, it's fun. You see people drinking. You see people going around wearing funny things. People are going around in underwear and scooters. You see people getting along. You see families. You see...It's just everything. It's all fun. I didn't see no fights, no arguments, no nothing like that. It's just everybody having a good time and just enjoying music, enjoying life.

Country concerts you see a little bit more...It's a little more patriotic; you'll see a lot of stuff like that, so that's a cool thing, too. It's great. You just see the best of people in those festivals. Even Eric Church, he's a great artist, too. He was there the first night. I became a bigger fan of him at the end of the night. He has a song where everybody is lifting their boots in the air. Everybody cooperates, participates and just has a blast. You see thousands of people having the greatest times of their life with you and just enjoying the moment. It's nice. It's a really cool place to be.

How has the conversations that you and your nephew have had since that time, how have they changed?

We're a little closer. I took him out to eat last night. At first he was really shook up about it and

really hard to talk to anybody about it. But I sat down and I was like, "We're going to talk about it." He was like, "Why are we going to talk about it? You were there, too." I was like, "Exactly, so I'm the only one who could really talk to you." People say, "Oh, I understand." If you weren't there, do you? Do you really understand? Do you know what that's like? Which is hard because the world is "if I haven't been through it, I don't care" type. A lot of people are like that.

Another big thing about my poetry is I'm empathetic, so I try to feel what other people feel so I can put myself in people's shoes, but a lot of people don't do that. So it's hard for us to talk about that with certain people because they're just like, okay, it's been a couple of months, get over it. It's nothing you get over. It changes your life. You don't just get over it, no matter what. It's like a scar. If you get a scar and the wound heals, it heals, but you look down and there's a mark that shows that it's not really fully gone. There's a reminder there at all times. And I think that's what it is in our mind. It's just something that is always going to be there.

I do try to talk to him and make sure that he's okay, but he seems to be doing pretty good. Luckily, he did get out of there fast.

When I ran out and I finally got out of the actual event, I called him, like, "Where are you at?" He said he was in a car, and I kind of yelled him, "Get out of that car. What are you doing? We don't know how many shooters there are; what they're in. You could have just got picked up..." Luckily, nothing like that happened, but at the moment I was terrified. I was like, "You call me when you get home." Me and my friend and some girls, we hid underneath a staircase for...I don't know how long.

The staircase where?

At the Hooters. There was a little back staircase we were hiding under. Nobody could see us. Nobody talked to us. I'm just like, *let's keep it that way.*

Good. And how did you get out of there? Because everything was on lockdown by the time you got out from under the staircase, probably.

When we got out of the staircase—the girls really needed to go to the bathroom, so I was going to make sure that everything was safe and we could get in there. So we went to the bathrooms. Then we seen everybody was more calm now. Because when we first gone through Hooters, someone came in saying there was a shooter. So we ran out. We were terrified. Then I found the staircase and I was like, "We're staying here."

But when we got out, everybody was watching the news. All the news stations had it on. At first, me and my friend Melissa, we went and we were watching the news. It said two dead, fifty injuries. We just looked at each other and I told her, "That's going to go up." We seen a bunch of people die ourselves and I seen a lot of like bodies. So I was like, "That's going up for sure." Sure enough, the aftermath, yes, it went way up.

How is Melissa doing?

I'm not sure to be honest with you. Sometimes she seems like she's okay; sometimes she don't. We were good friends for ten years. Unfortunately, right now we're not really talking.

Has she had any help?

Yes. I got information for a therapist, and so I was at a therapist and I made sure she got it, so she goes to the same therapist.

Okay, good.

I made sure that she did get help and that she did have someone to talk to for more than just the event, for things that have happened in her past, too. I wanted her to get help. I've always tried to make sure that she's okay. But unfortunately we don't talk right now.

How has your impression of this city changed, if it has?

It has. The Vegas Strong, I liked it, especially when everything happened and you see people going—I tried to help people. I seen people try and help people. I didn't go to where I seen like the people went. A lot of people went one way, so that's where a lot of things were happening, a lot of people were. I didn't get to see all that until the news and everything afterwards.

But how the city came together afterwards was really good for a little bit. For a while it was real strong and really good. And then a little bit at the time, like the people who—not the people, but some of the businesses or whatever that were real strong Vegas Strong, like, do this, they were kind of like, okay, that's over now, that's enough time, and they go back to Corporate America type things. At first it was really elevated to a better, more positive outlook, and now it's still elevated but not as much as it was when it first happened, if that makes sense. You start to see there are some people who pretend like they care or they care at the moment, but they don't really care overall, and I've learned that and I've seen it in different places and different things.

The fund that was put together to help people who were hurt is the smallest fund; when we compare it with Boston, the nightclub in Orlando, we have the smallest amount.

Oh, really? I didn't know that.

I didn't know that until yesterday.

I didn't know that until just now.

Article in the newspaper on yesterday. It kind of surprised me. I don't even know what my question is. It just surprised me.

Yes. You would think Vegas being such a big tourist spot and a really well-known city and then the magnitude of what happened that it would be different, but I didn't know that. I didn't know that until just now.

How has your opinion of guns changed, pro, con, same?

When it comes to guns with me...Guns aren't the problem; its people are the problem. This is what I try to tell people. So if you're, say, bullying, there's a lot of anti-bullying. Now, if a bully bullies a kid and then that kid commits suicide, the problem is bullying. But if a kid gets bullied and then that kid shoots up the school or shoots the bullies instead of killing himself, he goes that route, now all the sudden it's guns. It's the same thing. It's just a different reaction. So it's just the way people treat people nowadays that make it so bad because guns have been around for years, forever, but things like this didn't always happen. It's because as a humanity, as people we've learned to focus more on social medias, like we text more than we talk to people. We don't want to actually be around people, and when you are around people, you're stuck on your phones. So our connection with people has just been gone, has been divided and took a loss and took a hit, and because of that we don't know how to treat people no more. Just because we want to act that way, we want to do that, you don't know what you're going to push someone to do; they could do negative things whether it's themselves or others. It's how we treat that person that makes them do that and people don't like to think about that part of it. There is different reactions for people, like I said. One kid could commit suicide, one kid could shoot up a school, but, at the same time, they were both bullied, and that was the problem is how they were treated by their peers that made them do the decisions they did. Either way they're both negative; they're both heartbreaking. One of them did more damage than the other one, but the problem is the same. Everybody wants to focus on the guns. But if a gun sits there, it won't do nothing; someone has to pick it up. The personality that picks it up and shoots, that's what you need to focus on is. How did that person be treated? What did they do? There is people out there especially in the world of country music and stuff, they have guns all over the place, but they don't go commit mass

murders because they also treat people better. They treat people with respect. That's not what they want to do. If people started treating people better, I guarantee you things will go down. If you take away guns from people, criminals who are criminals, they're going to get guns, they're going to shoot people. Like, drugs are illegal, but people do them. They don't sell them, but they get them. That's always been my thing. I wish people would stop focusing on the guns' part and start focusing on how we treat people as individuals and how we just treat people. That's my biggest problem.

How can we get that attitude? So many people have told me exactly what you've told me today about the atmosphere among country music fans, not just at that particular event but at almost all events, the way you treat each other, what the music means to you, the happiness, the joy that's in the air. How do we spread that? How do we allow it to just flow out?

How, I'm not even sure. There's so many other things that manipulate people. I used to be big into rap, but nowadays rap is all "sleep with someone else's girlfriend; I got this much money; I got this car or this; stuff like that, and not everybody can relate to that. But country music is usually like either a heartbreak, and everybody's had that, or you're in love with a girl or there just about fun times, going out and partying and drinking; stuff like that; just things that you can relate to in everyday life, or it's a story. What I've noticed—I've been to rap concerts, I've been to rock concerts and I've been to country concerts—if you went to a rock or rap concert and you try to get to the front, people will say something bad about you or they'll try to push you out of the way, but in a country concert a lot of times they'll just let you go or you'll see people actually dancing with each other. It's just different.

The way to get it out there, I'm not even sure. Nowadays pop music and rap music and

stuff; that's the biggest out there and the sad thing about it is they have the most negative messages. It's all our subconscious what we listen. People are like, "Oh, I don't like this song; I just like the beat." I say, "Yes, but your subconscious listens to the words. You're still listening to the words and you're endorsing these people." Even like girls, I always made a joke when I see girls dancing to Chris Brown's "These Hoes Ain't Loyal." I was like, "He's calling you guys hoes and you're dancing and all this stuff and you think that it's cool and this guy is making millions of dollars off disrespecting you." That's just the difference. It's like people don't understand how strong the subconscious is. Whatever you tell yourself, whatever you listen to, whatever you put yourself around, that's what you become.

Exactly. How is your poetry going to change this?

If you read my poetry for everything that happened, what I try to do is... You'll read it. You'll know what we're going through. You'll know how we feel. You'll know what happened. But at the end there's always a positive twist to it. It's not like if you listen to a sad song or watch a sad movie with a sad ending and you leave sad; I don't want that. I want you to connect with it, feel it, and at the end of it get hope. That's what I always try to do, just try to put the positive out there, but show you the negative, have you connect with the negative, feel that this is how we feel, but at the end of it you're hopeful, like it is going to get better.

Good. I love this. I appreciate this so much.

I do, too.

Is there anything else, any other memories that you'd like to share?

On the whole night?

Yes, on the night.

My favorite thing about the darkness that happens—so like when I was trying to make positive

even though we were in a very negative situation. When I was at Hooters first, I ran into a couple of friends and stuff. Then someone came in there saying, "The shooter is here; the shooter is here." So we ran out and we ran to the back. And then I was running towards the Motel 6 that was next to the store. My friend was calling me. It's funny. He just happened to call me and he's like, "Hey, where are you at?" I was like, "Dude, I'm running for my life. There was a shooting." He's like, "I heard. I'm listening to the police scanners. They said there's a suspect at Motel 6." And I stopped and I was like, "Motel 6 where?" And he's all like, "On Trop." And I'm like, "Trop and Koval?" And he's like, "Yes." I'm like, "I'm heading there right now." And he's like, "Don't go that way."

So now I'm thinking, *okay, at Motel 6 is a suspect, behind me there's supposed to be a shooter inside Hooters, so where do I go?* So then I found that staircase and I'm like, "We're just hiding here." These girls came with me. When we were hiding behind the staircase, one of the first things I said to my friend Mel, I was like, "It became real to me when we saw the first guy die," when we seen that. Because I thought at first he fainted because I seen his head go back and kind of hit the ground and then he was covered in blood and then we realized that he's gone. When I said that, one of the girls that was with us, she was like, "Don't say that; don't say that; don't say that." I was like, "Okay." I learned right there I've got to try to make this as positive or I can't panic no more because if I panic then they're going to panic. I'm the only guy in this situation. Not like in a sex thing, but just being I'm the only man there, I felt the need to protect them. So I just swallowed all of it and tried to calm down. I just tried to be funny. Even though it was dark, I just tried to be as funny as I possibly can. So I was like, "What was your guys' favorite? Who was your favorite artist that you guys seen?" I said, "Obviously not Jason Aldean. So let's go. Who else?"

Then one of the girls, they said they needed water. The whole time I'm sitting there I'm so spaced out and tunnel vision that I forget that I have a backpack on with water and food. So I pull out a water bottle. It was towards the end of the show and I had taken a couple of sips and by the end of the night it will be gone, but then it will be over and we can go and we'll have more drinks with them later. So I only had a little bit of water left. I gave them the water. They passed it around. By the time they gave it back to me, it's empty. Then so I asked them, "Hey, you guys good on water?" They didn't answer me, so I kind of got the hint. They didn't want to tell me, yes, they were good on water because they weren't, and they didn't want to tell me no because they didn't want me to leave. But I just told them to keep against the wall and I'll be back. So I ran.

There was a security guard and I was asking him, "Hey, where can I get water?" He was telling me, "You go inside the hotel and turn right and there's a kitchen in here and you just keep going." I was like, "When I was running in here, there was a bar. I ran to the bar. So I'm just going to go to the bar. I know every hotel has water. I'm not going to touch anything else. I'm just going to get some water to the hose." He's just like, "Well, if you just go into the kitchen..." I was like, "The bar is right there. I'm just going to go to the bar." He kept on telling me, "No, if you go into the kitchen..." I was like, *okay, I'm not arguing with this guy anymore.*

So I ran in. I had grabbed the hose from the bar. I hide underneath the bar because the last thing I heard there was a shooter in Hooters. In my mind I'm not sure the safety level. We were safe, but—literally we were safe, but mentally we thought that we could get shot at any moment. I'm pouring water into my water bottle. Then people come out of hiding spots. They're like, "Oh, now we're talking." I'm like, "Oh, I don't work here. You guys think I work here. I don't work here." Someone was like, "Well, we should just make drinks. We deserve it, right?" I just told

them, "I'm not that type of person. Plus, I don't want to drink. I want to be as alert as possible, so that's not good." They agreed, as far as I know. I finished the water bottle, I came back in.

A little later the funny part is, one of the girls is like, "I've got to go to the bathroom really bad." I was thinking, *I don't know if that's a good idea right now*. I look over and there's a bucket next to me. So I was all like, "Hey, if you guys want to go to the bathroom in a bucket, I'm not going to judge you, no judgmental calls; this is that moment." So they kind of started laughing about it. "I'm not going to the bathroom in a bucket." I saw another bucket and I was like, "Hey, there's two buckets. I know you girls like to go in groups, so you guys could hold hands and do your thing." They're like, "We don't go to the bathroom together like that." So they started laughing and they were like, "Thank you for that." I just tried to keep it as positive as I can.

One of them said, "I feel a lot better with a SWAT team outside the door." I'm like, "Who told you there was a SWAT team outside the door?" Because we were sitting there the whole time. They're like, "Isn't that what they're saying?" Because we could hear people going up and down, but they didn't see us. So I was like, "Well, let me check." So I get up and I open the door and there was just that security guard and he's a bigger set guy. I come back in and I told them, "I don't want you guys to be alarmed." Because I want them to be knowledgeable and know what was going on, but not so fearful about it. So I told them, "There's not a SWAT team outside the door." And they were like, "Well, who is out there?" I was like, "Just one security guard." They were like, "Well, does he have a gun?" I was like, "He's probably got pepper spray and high cholesterol." So they started laughing. I was like, "Just trust me, I'm your best bet. We're right here. I promise I'll make you guys safe."

Later on they were telling me thank you for keeping us positive and having us laugh in

that situation. It was hard. When I got home, all that bottling up, I lost it. But at the moment I had to keep them positive and I had to keep them feeling as safe as they possibly can and not thinking that something was going to happen.

Did you have cell phones among the—what, four of you, five of you?

They had their cell phones. My phone died shortly after being under the staircase. My friend Melissa, she dropped her phone when we first got up, after we ducked down the second time—actually, the third time he started shooting when we were down. She got up. She dropped her phone. Part of the reason I got trampled is because I was going to grab her phone. So luckily I did grab her phone. So we did have her phone. She was messaging and saying, "We're okay right now." Keeping everybody informed. My friend was on the police scanners, which at the moment seemed like a good idea, but now that you see all the false reports that were into the thing, listening to the police scanners was not such a good idea. It just keeps you more terrified than you actually needed to be. But, yes, they did have cell phones. Towards the end I was the only one who didn't have a cell phone. I had a new phone, so they didn't have a charger for my phone at the place. I was going to go buy one and they didn't have that. So I just had a dead phone until I got home.

How did you get home?

When everybody was watching the news, like I was saying, two people dead, fifty people injured, I was looking at the news. I was like, "That's right outside where they're showing." You could see the people that are out there and they were looking at this thing. "So if we're going to go, we should go now. We'll just sneak out the back." So we just snuck and we crossed Tropicana. We ended up parking at MGM that day because I checked out of the Luxor on Sunday, went to her house, dropped off some stuff, and then went back to the MGM, parked

there and walked. The reason why we were going to Hooters is because we were running and then we stopped. There's Tropicana. And I was like, "I don't know where the shooter is, how many shooters there are, crossing Tropicana probably not a good idea right now, so let's just go into Hooters." It was all shut down, so it was easy to cross Tropicana. When we got to MGM, every time we saw a car we just kind of hid and then went to our car and just got out of there. But at that time it was almost three o'clock in the morning.

So this was you and Melissa. What about the other ladies?

The other ladies, when they went to the bathroom, they seen everybody was safe, so they were charging their phones and they came and said thank you for everything. I gave them my information, so we're Facebook friends now and stuff.

Oh, wonderful. Were they from here?

No. They actually live in California, which definitely right now it sucks, and when they went back there was a fire, too.

Yes, yes.

But I still talk to them. They were really cool girls. We connected through that event for sure. There's no one who can see all that. Hopefully we could do something in the future that we could all get together and hang out and actually have a fun time together, something where it's not so stressful. So hopefully something like that could happen.

Good. We know that it will. I am going to turn this off. I really appreciate all of this information.

I do, too.

Painted death, a feared duet, a torn heart and soul, a savvy set is shown beyond our days for as evil shown wears our mask through things accomplished through our past. Though what's done

is done is not our last. (Indiscernible) is on our way. For evil shouts our names and calls them with men crying and women sobbing because happiness is rare, but death is common. And this we claim as freedom? Our surroundings are full of (indiscernible) sights, sound and thunder and bloody fights. But if we do this for better nights, then why do we still fear them? Yet still we preach to commit no sins and turn our backs and do one again for we begin with our beginnings and we'll die with our end and not a moment less for as evil acts grow more and more and grow more stronger from war to war that are beyond our waters and before our shores and live longer with every beat within our chests.

I wrote that when I was seventeen or eighteen.

When you think about it now, do you think about October one?

Kind of. That poem is just about unless we change what we do—people are saying evil is like this thing that's—evil is us, what we do, our choices. People always try to tell me—I always have to face people that are like, "Oh, it's meant to me; it's just meant to be." I don't believe in "meant to be." The reason why I don't believe in "meant to be" is because if you believe in the Bible and you believe in "meant to be," you're contradicting because the Bible says we have a choice. But if your life is planned out like this is all going to happen...A train can't turn left and turn right on a whim because it's on a train track. So if our lives are like train tracks, then our choices are made for us. But that is I feel like a coward way to throw out your choices that you make and make it seem like, oh, it's just meant to be that way. No, because if you're going to be taking the good, you have to take the bad with it. So if, oh, we're not meant to be in a relationship, or this person was meant to be this, or it's just not meant to be, then rapists are meant to rape and killers are meant to kill and kidnapers are meant to kidnap; that means all that is true, too. So that means who would go to hell? Because if these people are meant to do these things, then how can you go

to hell or heaven based on choices? So it's all contradicting. That's why I tell people, you can't just cover out and be like, oh, it's meant to be. No, you choose for it not to be.

Exactly. We have to take some responsibility.

Yes. That's what people try to do; they try to throw the responsibility into fate and it's not. It's not true.

This one I titled *We Will Be Okay*. You can kind of get it to where you could know how we're going and at the end is a positive twist. It says:

Time has passed, so people ask if now I am okay. But my mind is scarred; therefore, it's hard for me to say that I am today. I know through time I'll heal my mind and one day I'll be okay. But it won't come quick; the time will tick before I can feel this way. Some might take longer, but we'll all be stronger once we reach that day. It's a hard pill to swallow and tears will follow, but we will once again be okay. It won't be fast, the time will pass, might not be tomorrow nor today. We will reach that goal and then feel whole and we'll feel better than okay. We still feel pain; our lives have changed; memories don't easily go away. We still hear the screams within our dreams haunted by the demons of that day. But as time passes, we'll rise through the ashes and we will overcome that evil day. This evil will conquer and we will be stronger. We will be better in every way. So life live it up, there's no giving up, when you need help you can pray. With every breath in you there's fight left in you and we'll fight until our last day. Together we can do this. I know we'll get through this. We won't let this evil have its way. So when the time has passed and that question they ask, you can answer you're better than ever that day. So let's follow the trail that leads out of this hell. In the past these demons can stay. We'll do it together and be stronger than ever and I promise we will be okay.

When do you write these? When do you find yourself needing to write?

Whenever I'm just alone, not doing anything and I want to keep my mind occupied because sometimes silence and the quietness could be like a devil's instrument. That's when you start to think about all these things and it can get negative and all these things. If I'm sitting there, if I'm feeling a certain way and it gets quiet and I don't have nothing to do, I try to make these feelings artistic, so I just try to transfer that into a poem. Or I'll even ask people, how are you feeling? And I'll write a poem about how you're feeling. I'll put myself in your shoes. I have a poem about what it's like to feel like a woman and be in the world today. Even though I'm not a woman in the world today, I wrote a poem about it. I just try to be as empathetic as possible. Just whenever I can really I write poems. I love it. I just love to write. If I'm alone I'll just start singing my own song and then I'm like, okay, that works; I'm going to write it down. Or just the poetry, if I get an idea it sparks it and I go with it.

Thank you so much.

Thank you.

I really appreciate the creativity and how you're using your talent.

I appreciate that a lot.

[End of recorded interview]