

CRIMINAL



Episode 121: Off Leash **Air date: August 30, 2019**

Copyright © 2019 Criminal Productions. All rights reserved. This text may not be published online or distributed without written permission. Transcripts are generated using a combination of speech recognition software and human transcribers, and may contain errors. Please check the corresponding audio before quoting in print.

Toby Dorr: Hi, my name is Toby. I am better known in the media as the Dog Lady of Lansing Prison.

Phoebe Judge: People get themselves in predicaments in life, but you really got yourself in one.

Toby Dorr: I did, I did. And you know, I was a perfectionist. I never did anything wrong, I never had a speeding ticket. I never didn't stop and count for three seconds at a stop sign, so I think I just saved all my stuff up for just one thing.

Phoebe Judge: I mean, if you're going to go big, go big.

Toby Dorr: I guess so. [Both laugh.]

[Music.]

Phoebe Judge: Toby Dorr was born in 1957. She got married when she was 20 and raised two boys. In 2004, she was working at a veterinarian's office in Kansas City. She answered the phones and scheduled appointments, helped get the animals ready for procedures. She says

she's always loved animals. One day, she noticed a lump on the side of her neck. She asked the veterinarian at the office to have a look at it.

Toby Dorr: And she said, "You need to go to a doctor right now." And so I did, I made an appointment and they did a biopsy and discovered that it was thyroid cancer. And you know, even though thyroid cancer is a very treatable cancer, still hearing your name after the word cancer is devastating and it causes you to stop and take stock of your life. And I realized that I could go at any minute, and I had not done anything that made my time here worthwhile. And so, I realized I didn't want to leave this earth and not have done anything to have made it a better place because I was here.

Phoebe Judge: During her treatment, Toby didn't have much energy at all. She said she could barely pick up a book.

Toby Dorr: I mean, you were just like in this fog, like you're moving through 50 feet of water just to do anything. So I spent most of my time in the recliner watching *Cell Dogs* on Animal Planet.

Phoebe Judge: What is *Cell Dogs*? I don't know this, *Cell-*

Toby Dorr: *Cell Dogs* was a program that ran on Animal Planet for a few years. And it was inside of a prison and they had dogs in there. And the inmates were training them, and then they were taking them out for adoptions.

Phoebe Judge: And you like dogs?

Toby Dorr: I love dogs. That's kind of an understatement. Yeah. I thought that would be my dream. I could make a difference if I could do something like that. If I could start a prison dog program, I know I could change the world. And my husband said, "That's just a ridiculous idea. That's only a TV show. They don't do that in real life."

Phoebe Judge: So Toby did the closest thing she thought she could. She started taking home the stray dogs that were brought into the vet clinic where she worked. After training them, she'd find them a new home. And then she got a call.

Toby Dorr: I mean, I had just started when someone from the Lansing Correctional Facility approached me and said, "Toby, would you consider doing a prison dog program?" I was like, "Oh my gosh! Yes!"

Phoebe Judge: I thought you'd never ask.

Toby Dorr: "Yes, yes. That's right. I've been dreaming about that for months." I had no idea how to build a prison dog program but I just figured I knew dogs, I knew how to train dogs, I would just create it as I go. So, I scrambled running around to animal shelters, trying to find some dogs. And so on that Friday, which was actually Friday the 13th in August of 2004, I took seven dogs into Lansing Correctional Facility, and the Safe Harbor Prison Dog program was born.

Phoebe Judge: So the idea here would be that the inmates at the Lansing Correctional Facility — you'd leave the dogs with the inmates and they would do the training. How would it work?

Toby Dorr: Well, it was really important to me that my dogs live in the same cell with their handlers, because to me that was more of a 'home environment'. I didn't want him to get used to this artificial kennel environment when I was trying to adopt them into homes, and I wanted them to fit into the homes. So, we put the dogs right in the cells with the inmates, they slept in the beds with the inmates, and anybody who was an inmate at the prison was free to pet a dog.

Phoebe Judge: Toby quit her job at the vet clinic because she didn't have time for anything but the prison dog program. She had a barn on her property that she filled with dog kennels. She got up at 5 each morning and spent 15 hours a day shuttling the dogs to the vet and the animal shelter and the prison, teaching the inmates to train the dogs.

So, you interacted a lot with these inmates. This wasn't just dropping the dog off and then I'll pick it back up in a few months.

Toby Dorr: That's right. I spent a lot of time. I probably spent maybe as much time inside the prison as an officer that was on duty. It became my entire life.

Phoebe Judge: What did your family and friends think about this program? Your husband?

Toby Dorr: Well, my husband never was much on board with the program. And he didn't like as much time as I spent with it, and he didn't like the notoriety that it brought. So my husband resented it, but we didn't have a good marriage. It was just one more way that I did my own thing and he did his own thing. I never did come home and talk to him about anything that was going on, because he wasn't interested in it.

Phoebe Judge: How long had you been married?

Toby Dorr: We'd been married for 28 years. So, we met when I was 15 and he was 16 and we started dating in high school. And I never really dated anyone else. So, we got married when we were 20, we got along, we didn't fight, so we might as well get married, kind of a thing. And there were several times in our marriage that I realized this had not been a good choice, but I didn't know how to get out, I didn't know how to make a change.

So, I mean, one of the instances is, we had just been married maybe two or three months, and my husband was gone every weekend to play golf with his friends and so he'd be gone for eight or nine hours a day. And I was really lonely, because I was the oldest of seven kids. And I was used to a house that was just bubbling full of things and conversations and so many activities going on. And now I was sitting at home alone on Saturday for most of the day, while my husband went and played golf. And I felt so lonely. So, I made some phone calls and found out where I could take some golf lessons. And when my husband got home on this particular Saturday, I said, "Guess what? I found a place that I can take golf lessons." He said, "Well, Toby, if you want to take golf lessons, the first thing you should do, so that you don't waste your money, is to find someone to golf with. Because it's no fun golfing by yourself." And I said, "Well, I thought I would golf with you." And he said, "No, I golf with my friends."

Phoebe Judge: So you were lonely-

Toby Dorr: Yes.

Phoebe Judge: ... and figured out a way to ... and these dogs certainly seem like ...

Toby Dorr: Oh man, those dogs loved me. And those dog handlers loved me.

Phoebe Judge: How did you meet John Maynard?

Toby Dorr: Well, so I was walking into the prison and I was walking across the prison yard when John Maynard walked up to me. And he just approached me so directly, and most inmates didn't do that, but he just kind of swaggered up and stopped right in front of me. And he stuck out his hand, and he said, "Hi, I'm John Maynard, and I want to be your next dog handler. You need me in your program because I'm probably the best dog trainer you've ever met." And I was like, "Oh, okay."

Phoebe Judge: Toby told him that he would first have to get approval from the warden, like all the other dog handlers. Two weeks later, John Maynard was standing at the gate, waiting for her.

Toby Dorr: I started taking dogs out of the truck and I would hand them off to dog handlers. And usually I would just hand a dog to the closest person and say, "Here's your dog, here's your dog, here's your dog." And everybody was thrilled to get whatever I gave him. But John Maynard took every single dog out of the truck and he evaluated him. And he petted him and he looked at him and he ran his hands over their coat and he walked them around on a leash. And then he said, "I'll take this one." And that was the first time anybody had ever been that direct, and so I was amused by that, I suppose is a good word.

Phoebe Judge: What did he look like?

Toby Dorr: John Maynard was about 6' 4" and he had a really lanky build and he had red hair, bright red hair. And he kind of swaggered everywhere he went in the prison, like he owned the place or he was in charge. And he just didn't conform, like most of the inmates do. You knew that there was just something different about him.

Phoebe Judge: John Maynard was serving a life sentence at Lansing for his involvement in a carjacking when he was 17. A man was shot and killed. John Maynard claimed that it was his accomplice who had fired the gun, not him. A witness supported John's version of events, but because he had been involved in committing the felony, he was convicted of first degree murder. He'd been in prison for about 10 years when he met Toby. He was 27. She was 48.

Toby Dorr: So, there came a time when I was inside the prison, when I heard some ... I mean, I would just walk around in the prison by myself, not accompanied by an officer at all. And I heard some inmates make some sexual comments, under their breath as I walked by. And it made me a little bit nervous. I mean, I looked around and I realized, you know, this is a huge prison. There's a million — well, not a million but it seemed like a million — inmates in there, and I was vulnerable.

So, I shared with the warden's office that I wasn't comfortable just walking around inside there without an officer or without some protection. So, they told me to always be sure I was in the accompaniment of one of my dog handlers. Because the dog handlers wouldn't let anyone say anything to me or accost me in any way. "So, just don't walk through the prison alone, just make sure when you come to the gate, you meet up with one of your dog handlers and ask someone to walk with you the whole time." And so, I did that for about a year and it worked fine.

Until one day I was walking with two of my dog handlers, and I came upon another dog handler who wanted his girlfriend to adopt his dog. And I ran into this inmate in the yard, and it had been about eight weeks since he'd asked me if he could adopt his dog. And I said to him, "Hey, when is your girlfriend going to pick up your dog? Because I've got a lot of dogs lined up waiting to come in here, and I need that space." And he got mad at me and he started screaming at me and he put his fists up and he was in my face and he was yelling at me and cussing at me and saying, "You know, you let everybody else wait for their dogs. I don't know why you're being this way to me."

And so I looked over at my two dog handlers for help, and they were looking down at their feet because they didn't want to confront this guy. And I just knew I was going to get hit. And this guy outweighed me by 150 pounds. And I didn't know what to do. And so then I looked past this guy who was confronting me and I saw John Maynard kind of swaggering across the yard. And he walked up and I just heaved the sigh of relief, because I knew now I was safe because nobody was going to mess with John Maynard. And Maynard just said to him, "Go on back to your cell, Toby, let me walk you to the gate." When I got outside the prison, I just fell apart. And I called my contact at the warden's office and said, "I am never going back in that prison again. There is no way I will do this, this isn't safe. And I'll run the prison dog program, but I'm not going inside the prison. I'll run it from outside."

So on Monday morning, this person, my contact in the warden's office, called me back and said, "Now, when you come up to the prison, you just page Maynard." So, when I got to the prison, I'd call and say, "Page Maynard to the gate." And he'd come to the gate and meet me, and he'd walk me to every dog I needed to visit and stay there through my training sessions. That was too much time to be spending together with John Maynard.

Phoebe Judge: The warden at the prison has said that Toby didn't actually have an assigned escort, let alone an inmate, but she was allowed to wander around the prison alone. He later told a reporter that "she'd been around so long and done so much, we just said, 'When you get here, you've got your ID, you can go do what you need to do.'"

Toby says that each day, she and John would meet at the gate. One morning, Toby arrived at the prison exhausted. She'd been at the hospital all night; her father had had emergency surgery.

Toby Dorr: And Maynard met me at the gate, and he said, "Toby, what's wrong with you? I mean, something's going on in your life, I can see it." Which, for one thing, that was really refreshing to me, because nobody else noticed that I was upset. And he said, "Wasn't your husband there with you?" And I said, "Well, no. He said, 'There's no sense in both of us not

getting a good night's sleep. So I'm just going to stay here, and you go on to the hospital." And Maynard just looked at me and he shook his head, and he said, "Why do you stay married to him?" That question, you can't ever unhear that question, and so I started thinking, "I don't have an answer for that question. I don't know. Why am I still married to him?" And so, it just kind of opened another door.

Phoebe Judge: Were you attracted to him?

Toby Dorr: I was. I thought about him all the time.

Phoebe Judge: You thought, "Well, if John Maynard was my husband, someone would have been sitting with me in the hospital that night."

Toby Dorr: That's exactly right. It was just kind of like pouring water on a dying plant, to hear somebody notice that I was there and I had needs and I was important enough to notice when I wasn't feeling right. If I had met someone while I was pumping gas who flirted with me, I would have immediately shut them down. Because I didn't want to get caught up in having an affair or something like that. But when John flirted with me, I didn't see the danger. Because he was behind bars. This could never grow into an affair. This was a harmless thing. Which seems kind of strange, but it felt like because he was in prison, it was so impossible that anything would develop that it was a little bit safer to let something get started.

[Music.]

Phoebe Judge: And then it just ...

Toby Dorr: Then it just became bigger than anything you could contain.

Phoebe Judge: I'm Phoebe Judge. This is Criminal.

[Music.]

Toby Dorr: He said to me once, "If I wasn't in here, would you be with me?" And I said, "Yes, I think I might." And that's when he told me that he loved me and he wanted to escape and be with me. And at first I said, "I can't do that." And over time, he just kept bringing it up and then I thought, "Okay, maybe I could do that."

Phoebe Judge: What did he say?

Toby Dorr: He just said, "You know, I just love the color of your eyes that matches your hair so perfectly. And you deserve someone who wants to make you the center of their world, and that's what I would do," and those kinds of things.

Phoebe Judge: I bet you hadn't heard that for a while.

Toby Dorr: No. I don't know if I ever heard it.

Phoebe Judge: And then what did he say?

Toby Dorr: And he said he had some ideas. He said, "I could put myself in a box and ship me out through UPS to somewhere and you could just go pick up the box." Then he said, "You know, when you come to do a dog adoption, I could hide in a dog crate."

Phoebe Judge: [Laughing.] I'm not trying to laugh but I'm just trying to really —

Toby Dorr: Well, it is kind of funny, actually.

Phoebe Judge: They started putting together a plan. Toby says she took \$40,000 out of her 401k to cover expenses. They needed a vehicle, but they couldn't use Toby's car or the prison dog van. So she bought an old truck for \$5,000.

Toby Dorr: So, I started thinking about, "Where could I keep that truck?" I obviously couldn't keep it at my house. And there was a new storage unit that opened, kind of between my house and the prison. And I went one day to look at it, and the guy said, "Well, we're just opening, so we don't have our security cameras set up yet. That won't be for a month or two, but once we get them up, this is how it's going to work." And so I thought, "Well, this could be the perfect place because there's no security cameras to see me come and go."

Phoebe Judge: Meanwhile, John was working on his part of the escape, figuring out how to fit himself into a dog crate. They decided that he would have to get himself into a cardboard box inside the dog crate, so no one would spot him. The box couldn't be any taller than three feet or it wouldn't fit. John was 6 foot 4.

Toby Dorr: He tried a dozen different ways to try to fit in this box, and every time he tried the box would bust. So, nothing worked. And so he said one night, he dreamed about how to fit in this box, and so he got up and he tried it and it worked. Somehow, he pulled one leg over his head and one leg behind him and fit in this box. And he told me that while he was in that box, he was hyperventilating because he couldn't breathe, there wasn't room enough to breathe very well. It was scary for him to be folded up into that box.

Phoebe Judge: So he put this box inside of the dog crate-

Toby Dorr: Yes.

Phoebe Judge: Then he got inside the box-

Toby Dorr: Yes.

Phoebe Judge: -which was already inside the crate, and then closed the box and closed the door?

Toby Dorr: Well, I think he would have had to tell someone to close the door if it wasn't closed, because I don't know how you could have closed the door yourself while you were in a box.

Phoebe Judge: I think he probably had a little help, don't you?

Toby Dorr: Well, it won't surprise me. And then the next time I'd come up, he said, "I figured out we do it this way." And then finally I said, "You know, I think that could work. I think that might

work. I think we could pull this off." So to me, when I was talking to him about it, in some ways it was like a game to figure out what would work and what wouldn't. But then all of a sudden we had come up with a plan that was real enough that it was doable, and then all of a sudden we were setting a date. And it just seemed like overnight, okay, all of a sudden we have a plan.

Phoebe Judge: I mean, I guess when the first option is shipping yourself out in a UPS box, actually the dog crate seems like... pretty, pretty practical.

Toby Dorr: Yes, it did.

Phoebe Judge: Toby says that John told her that he lost 25 pounds so he could fit in the box. They picked a day Toby was scheduled to be there to pick up dogs for adoption, February 12th, 2006. It was a Sunday and it would be cold. They figured that most people would just want to stay inside — fewer people to see Toby load the van. Toby had told prison officials that she needed to pick up some equipment she'd stored in a box in a spare dog crate. She and John arranged for the crate to be loaded onto a wagon and rolled out to the van.

Toby Dorr: So the plan was I would get there and he would be down in the wagon at the adoption gate by 10:30, I would pick up all the dogs for the adoption, I would pick up John Maynard, and then we would leave. And I would take the dogs back to my house and leave them in the barn. And then we would head to the storage unit and get the truck.

Phoebe Judge: How was the night before the escape like?

Toby Dorr: Well, the night before the escape was so tense, there was so much riding on every single thing falling into place the next morning. And I did a prison dog newsletter every week for the prison dog program. And I emailed it out and it went to thousands of people all across the country. And I felt so compelled to finish that task — the escape was on a Sunday, and Sunday's the day I sent out the newsletter. So I stayed up late on Saturday night, writing the newsletter for that week, and I sent that newsletter out. So, I didn't finish that job till after midnight that night.

And my husband went up to bed. He said, "Well, I'm going to go to bed." And he walked up the stairs to go to bed, and I looked up at him and I said, "Goodbye." And I thought, "Oh crap, I said, goodbye. He's going to pick up on that. He's going to ask me why would I say goodbye? He's just going to bed. I should've said goodnight, but I said goodbye." [Phoebe laughs.] And he never said anything, and he just went up and went to bed. And then I thought, "Okay, I'm doing the right thing then. I can't believe he didn't notice that slip of tongue."

Phoebe Judge: That was all you said to him, goodbye?

Toby Dorr: That's all I said, goodbye. Yeah. Then I got up the next morning and it was snowing, and the van was sliding on the snow. And on any other normal day, I would have canceled the adoption event, because it wasn't worth getting out in that weather. But I couldn't cancel this adoption. So, I got there early because I was nervous and I didn't know what else to do. So I got there early and my dog handlers were all lined up behind the fence with their dogs. And it was a cold day, the wind was blowing, nobody wanted to be outside. And they were standing behind

the fence with their dogs, and they were kind of stomping their feet and looking at the gate and waving at me to like, "Hurry up, open the gate and get these dogs, and let us go back to our rooms and be warm."

But I couldn't open the gate until I saw the farm wagon there, because if I loaded all the dogs and then we just brought the farm wagon, it would be under more scrutiny because it would be the only thing happening. And we needed to have the chaos of all the dogs getting loaded in crates and jumping around and barking, and then this crate getting loaded in at the same time. While I'm waiting there and I'm thinking, "Where is that farm wagon? Why isn't it here? Why is he late? He knew how important his timing was." I had just about decided that I was just going to open the gate and load the dogs and I was going to leave and go to this dog adoption and he was on his own, whatever was going to happen he was going to deal with it because I couldn't wait anymore. Just as I thought that, I looked up and that farm wagon came around the corner.

And when I saw it, I gasped out loud because the weight on it was so heavy that the tires were nearly flat. And I thought, "How does no one not notice that?" I mean, a couple of dog dishes and some leashes aren't going to make enough weight to make those tires flat like that. But nobody noticed, nobody said anything. So I opened the gate, told the inmates to start putting their dogs in the crates, and I went around and open the side door of the van. And two or three guys had pulled the wagon down, and they picked up the crate and slid it in and I shut the side door. I walked around to the back of the van and made sure that all the dogs were in their crates and the crate doors were shut. And I closed the back doors to the van and I took the adoption papers from the handlers, and I got in the truck and I left.

Phoebe Judge: Was there any point that you thought, "I don't want to do this. I'm not doing this"?

Toby Dorr: Well, I was thinking that when I had decided I was just going to go ahead and go without picking up John, and tell them to open the gate and I'm just going to go. But then I saw the farm wagon and realized that it was too late to not go. So...

Phoebe Judge: You drove away, and how long was it before John got out of the box?

Toby Dorr: Well, I drove off the prison grounds and then I turned onto the city street, and I hollered back, I said, "John, are you here?" And he didn't answer. And I thought, "Oh, good. This didn't work after all. I can just still go to an adoption and I can just be a normal person." And so, I started driving and then when I got on the city street, all of a sudden an arm popped out of that box and I heard him laughing.

[Music.]

And John Maynard popped out of that box and he said, "Drive, drive!"

Phoebe Judge: First, they took the dogs to Toby's barn, which she'd turned into a kennel. She says she knew a volunteer was scheduled to be there later that day. And then Toby drove to the storage unit. John took the keys to the truck.

Toby Dorr: And he drove the truck out of the storage unit, and I backed the van into the storage unit. And we closed the storage unit door, and I got in the truck, and we left.

Phoebe Judge: They drove all night to get to a lakeside cabin in Tennessee that Toby had reserved under a made-up name. John hadn't been outside prison since he was 19.

Toby Dorr: John was really interested in eating fried chicken and a lot of foods that he wasn't able to get inside prison. And he played the guitar, and I brought my mandolin with me. And so he'd play music and we just talked a lot. And that lasted for a day or two, and then John said, "You know, I don't want to just stay in this cabin. I want to go out and see things. Let's go do some stuff." And I thought, I told him, "Well, you told me we had to stay hidden, we couldn't be out doing things." He said, "Well, nobody's going to find us. They aren't going to have any idea where we are. I want to go to Nashville, let's go to Nashville and look at some guitars." And so, after that first day, almost every day we went somewhere and did something, kind of like we were on vacation.

Phoebe Judge: Were you happy?

Toby Dorr: No, I can't say I was happy. I was scared. I was scared and ... maybe regretful is the word. The first day in the truck, John took all the cash from me and there was only one key to the truck and he had the key to the truck, and then at somewhere along the way after we left the prison, he took my cell phone and threw it into a lake. So, I didn't have a phone, I didn't have any cash, I didn't have a key, I didn't have any way to get anywhere on my own. And so I kind of felt like there was no escape from my escape. I felt like I was having to be careful of what I said or what I did, and I just felt like it was a lot more volatile than I expected.

Phoebe Judge: Sometimes I have these dreams at night where I've done something terrible, something very bad has happened, and I think, "Oh, no, oh no, if only this could not be true." Then I wake up and I'm so happy-

Toby Dorr: Yes.

Phoebe Judge: The happiest I've ever been in my life.

Toby Dorr: Yes.

Phoebe Judge: It's like the difference for you, though, was that — were you — did you think, when you went to bed sleeping, "Oh, everything's okay." And then you'd wake up and you'd realize, "Oh no, I actually went through with this"?

Toby Dorr: Yes, I did. And then I would think, "Toby, it can't be as bad as you think. There's some good things — John bought you candy for Valentine's Day, that's a good thing. Think about those things, don't think about these times when he got mad. Just try to focus on the good things, because this is where you are, and you need to make it be a good thing because you don't have a way out."

[Music.]

Phoebe Judge: One day, Toby and John put on some wigs and went to the mall in Chattanooga. They wanted to see a documentary about lions. John bought Toby a book at Barnes & Noble, *Where the Red Fern Grows*. As they were walking out of the store, they walked past two police officers.

Toby Dorr: They didn't draw attention to us, but they followed us. We got on the interstate to head back to the cabin. And as we drove up over this hill, I looked over to the right and I saw all these cars stopped on the entrance ramp, and there were police cars there blocking the entrance ramp and not letting anyone come on the highway. And I was looking over there at it and thinking, "That is an unusual sight. I have never seen anything like that before." And I said ... I was still looking over at the ramp, and I said to John, "There must be a big accident up ahead, and they need to keep the highway cleared to take care of this accident."

And John said, "Oh no, Toby, this is for us." And I said, "What's for us?" And I turned around and looked out the front window, and the whole highway was filled with police cars. There was black and white cars, blue sheriff's cars, green cars, black SUV's, every kind of police car you've ever seen. There was just this mishmash of everything on the interstate in front of us. And they were all lined up in every lane and they were driving really slow, and there had to be maybe 30 or 40 or 50 police cars.

Phoebe Judge: What did you think?

Toby Dorr: I thought, "Who do they think we are that they need all this? You know, all they had to do is turn on their lights and we would have pulled over." And so John said to me, he said, "Toby, you're in this too, you should have a say, what do you want me to do?" And I said, "Well, John, if they turn on the lights and ask you to pull over, you have to pull over because that's the law." And he said, "Okay then, if that's what you want to do, that's what I'll do." And just then, a police car went around us really fast and pulled in front of us and slammed on their brakes. And John got mad, and he said, "They're trying to kill us. I'm not stopping, I'm going to run until we run out of gas." I looked over at the speedometer and I saw that we had three quarters of a tank of gas, and I thought to myself, "I can't make it through three quarters of a tank of gas."

And so, John took off, and he was driving like crazy. And he was squeezing between these police cars and squeezing around these semi-trucks. And when John realized he couldn't move forward, he drove across the median and back into the southbound lanes. The funny thing is we had all these sirens going and all this noise and John was talking the whole time, and I couldn't hear one thing. It was like it was slow motion and there was no sound. Then John pulled off the shoulder of the road onto the shoulder to pass the semi-truck. And then another car cut in front of him, so he pulled off into the grass. And when he pulled back up on the highway, he lost control of the car. And we sped across the interstate and hit a tree at 100 miles an hour, head on.

And I was praying that God would just let me die in that wreck, because I knew I couldn't deal with what was to come and I just wanted to be done. And I didn't die. I didn't even get hurt, other than bruised. So, we crashed into this tree and the steam's coming off the hood of the truck and

all these police cars are coming at us and men are running through the woods with machine guns and screaming at us. And John got out of the truck, and they arrested him right away.

Phoebe Judge: Toby had a hard time getting out because her door was smashed. Once she did, she fell on the ground, and when she looked up, she remembers John trying to run around the truck to see her. He was handcuffed and dragging officers behind him.

Toby Dorr: He said, "Toby, Toby, Toby, are you okay? Are you okay?" And I said, "Yes, I'm okay, I think." And that's the last thing I said to him.

Phoebe Judge: John Maynard was already in prison with a life sentence. A judge added 10 more years for the escape. Toby was sentenced to 27 months in prison.

Toby Dorr: I was charged with aiding and abetting a felon, taking contraband into the prison, and then I was also charged with a federal charge of providing handguns to a felon.

Phoebe Judge: Did you?

Toby Dorr: Well, yes, there were handguns in our house, and I made them available to John. And I pled guilty for — you know, John told me that we'd be carrying a lot of cash and somebody would want to take it from us, and if we just had a gun with us that all he'd have to do is show the gun and people would leave us alone.

Phoebe Judge: She told us it was a dumb move in the middle of a bunch of other dumb moves. She found out later that the reason the police knew they were in Tennessee was because she'd had the registration for the truck mailed to the cabin. She says she "wasn't a great criminal."

How did your family react?

Toby Dorr: Well, my family ... It was awesome, my mom loved me unconditionally. She came to visit me in prison every week, every chance she could get. My dad died about three or four weeks after we were arrested. [Emotional, choked up.] So he came to the jail and saw me a couple of times, but he passed away. And my sisters and I have not been able to reestablish our relationship. And my sons and I never did reconnect and have a relationship either.

Phoebe Judge: How old were your sons?

Toby Dorr: My sons were 25 and 21.

Phoebe Judge: That's horrible.

Toby Dorr: It's terrible, it was hard.

Phoebe Judge: Toby and her husband hardly spoke at all. He filed for divorce the day before she went to prison.

What was it like to be in prison?

Toby Dorr: You know, I was terrified to go into prison. I had spent a lot of time inside the men's prison and I knew how violent it could be. But I discovered that women's prison is a lot different than the men's prison, and it isn't nearly as violent. It's more like high school drama on steroids. But there were times inside prison where I found relationships with some of the other women inmates to be the strongest relationships I've ever had in my life. People that really cared about what happened to you and wanted to help you in any way they could. And I think it was inside prison where I learned what a true friendship could look like.

Phoebe Judge: You weren't lonely when you were in prison?

Toby Dorr: I wasn't. No, I wasn't.

Phoebe Judge: After she was released from prison, Toby went to live with her mother back in Kansas City. But everyone in town knew what she'd done. She said that other people pointed at her in restaurants. So she found a job in Boston and moved there, and it was there that she met her future husband, Chris. They'd only known each other a week when Chris found out that a friend of his was in jail.

Toby Dorr: And he said he was going to write a letter to him in the jail, and I said to him, "Well, you need to know his inmate number or the letter won't get to him." And he looked at me and he said, "How would you know you need to know the inmate number?" And I said, "Well, I just do." And so, he went home that night and Googled me, and he came in the next day and he said, "We need to talk. I want to hear your whole story." And so, you know, almost from the start, he knew my story.

Phoebe Judge: Three years after Toby got out of prison, she says she started talking to John Maynard again. She and Chris even sent him Christmas baskets and visited him once. She says she wanted closure, and that she felt sorry for him. Eventually, they talked less and less. They haven't spoken in four years.

Did he apologize?

Toby Dorr: No, I don't believe that he did. I've thought about that, and I don't think he did. I think what he said was, "You knew what you were getting into." Which I don't really think I did know, but no, he didn't apologize.

Phoebe Judge: I mean, this is the question: did this guy care for you, or was he just using you? What do you think?

Toby Dorr: You know, honestly, I think it's probably a little bit of both. I do think he cared for me, but I've since come to appreciate that if you love someone, you don't ask them to do something that puts their life in danger.

Phoebe Judge: After his arrest, John Maynard wrote a letter to the Kansas City Star. He said, "I love Toby and was 100% committed to her. Why did I stay with her once I was out if I was just manipulating? I love Toby with all that I was."

In her last few months in prison, Toby wrote an apology letter to the former warden of Lansing Prison. She didn't expect a reply, but he wrote back just a few weeks later. He said, "I felt a lot of different emotions, but anger and resentment were not among them. Initially, it was fear for your safety, then more a sense of frustration and to be completely honest, some feelings of betrayal. I do, however, still believe you to be a decent, kind, and caring person who made some bad decisions for reasons that are beyond my knowledge."

You know, sometimes we hear about people fantasizing about blowing up their lives or thinking about blowing up their lives... You really did it.

Toby Dorr: I did it, you're right. [Phoebe laughs.] I certainly did. There is no doubt of that. It's the craziest story I've ever heard, and to think that I lived it is kind of hard to grasp sometimes. But it happened. You know, it's real.

Phoebe Judge: The Dog Lady of Lansing Prison-

Toby Dorr: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Phoebe Judge: -is you.

Toby Dorr: That's me. That's right.

[Music.]

Phoebe Judge: The program Toby started, the Safe Harbor Prison Dog Program, is still operating at Lansing Prison today.

[Music.]

Criminal is created by Lauren Spohrer and me. Nadia Wilson is our senior producer. Susannah Roberson is our assistant producer. Audio mix by Rob Byers. Special thanks to Courtney Rigdon. Julianne Alexander makes original illustrations for each episode of Criminal. You can see them at thisiscriminal.com. We're on Facebook and Twitter, @CriminalShow.

Criminal is recorded in the studios of North Carolina Public Radio, WUNC. We're a proud member of Radiotopia from PRX, a collection of the best podcasts around.

I'm Phoebe Judge. This is Criminal.

Jingle: Radiotopia. From PRX.