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alienation, ostracizing the losers and dorks.

J.Z.: When we try to play by other people's rules.

S.L.: Right, and we hold ourselves up to these standards — especially women: good mother, good looking, good in bed, good person. And they're impossible standards. So, really, it's about holding yourself accountable to only yourself and just trying to be better all the time. Be good and do good, and you know the difference.

J.Z.: So make your own rules.

S.L.: Fuck yeah!

J.Z.: Tell me what you think of this: "Storm Large is a singer best known as a contestant on the CBS reality television show Rock Star: Supernova." That's it. That's your definition on Wikipedia. It may just be Wikipedia, but that's what people are going to see.

S.L.: I don't know who writes Wikipedia. I saw I have a page and I see "click here to edit." Click here to edit? Anyone could! It could be like, "Storm has an arm growing out of her back and a toenail on the head of her penis." And I'm afraid of piñatas! No, I'm actually not afraid of piñatas.

J.Z.: It just struck me as a shallow representation of a life — your life.

S.L.: As a public person you're really only known for what people see. And if you have some level of celebrity in a city like Portland, the majority of folks around have met you or encountered you in some way. When I was on television was when I started to get chased through airports — people crying, holding up phones, "Please talk to my sister — she's going through chemo." "Oh my god, my daughter would die if she knew I was shaking her hand right now." And I still get that.

I was actually talking to a very famous movie star, who is now on television, about the differences in fame response. Fame is fascinating to me. When you're a musician, people will come to see you, and you are up on a stage, and you are lit, and you look more than real. You're beautiful. You're powerful. You're amplified. You're electric. And when you're a movie star, the audience sits in the dark and you have this huge screen and you're impossibly gorgeous or impossibly talented or paid exorbitant amounts of money, and people know things about you and you have mysteries. But when you're on television, you're freely flowing into someone's home constantly, so people assume a relationship with you or your character.

You are in that house while they're having dinner, while they're putting their kids to bed, while they're sick, while they're fighting. With television fans, especially people who work 9 to 5, or they're moms and they're busy. It's their time to just sit in front of the television. They don't have the

luxury to develop relationships with their friends or go out and engage in outside activities. They sit in front of the television to just let their brain go a little bit, so the relationship they develop is with those characters.

J.Z.: With "Crazy Enough," was there a connection made with the community that is not necessarily theater going or of means, but people who really could see you as a personal inspiration? Was there a connection made with that audience?

S.L.: During the run of "Crazy Enough," because it ran so long and was successful, we offered gratis tickets to Girls Incorporated and Planned Parenthood and a lot of other nonprofits who came, and all these psychologists and psychiatrists came, and I always did kind of a meet-and-greet at some of the matinees. I would go and sit with the audience, and there would always be one or two folks who had a tough go and were dealing with mental health issues. People still come up to me and thank me for it. I appreciate that my story means that much to folks, but it also makes me feel so spoiled because I really dodged a bullet. And no dis to the psychiatric community or the APA, they do a lot of great work, but I really feel that when I was going through what I was going through with drugs and sex and running away and being angry and self destructive, if I had gotten locked up or taken into the system, I'd probably be dead or homeless, on the streets, on a bridge, really crazy. Because especially when you don't have insurance and you're poor and you get into that system, they don't take care of you. There's no way to take care of you.

J.Z.: Why do you say that?

S.L.: When I was growing up, when I would visit my mom at the hospital, I saw women like this, and men, who were alone in the world. Just thrown away. And it was only in the late 60s early 70s when big insurance companies started to recognize manic depression as an actual illness and started to allow people with insurance to be covered under that. But still, it was like draconian treatment.

My mom had rich parents and sometimes she got to stay at these cush, awesome hospitals. But when it was up to my dad, his insurance was long run out by the time I was 6 years old, so he had to sell shit to get her into a hospital or she would go to the state hospital. And man, when she was in the state hospital, she would have been better off in a prison.

J.Z.: That much of a difference?

S.L.: Oh my god! The level of danger, of physical threat, was always looming in the air. And we're little, my brother and I, and we're walking in there, and there are women masturbating with hair brushes, banging their heads on the wall, and just nightmarish, and I don't think it's really gotten much better.

At the end of my mom's life she was staying in assisted living facility, and it was a wonderful place. My father was long out of the picture. (He was a teacher.) In the 80s, I stopped going to the hospital to visit my mom. My mom kept insisting that she needed to be hospitalized, and I saw it as a cry for help. And to see her knowing that she didn't need the care that these other people needed and that she just wanted attention and subjecting us to this ...

J.Z.: Kind of Munchausen's Syndrome?

S.L.: Absolutely. And it was disgusting to me, and so I stopped going to visit her. And to this day, I can't go to hospitals. A mental hospital, absolutely not. I freeze. I think that's the biggest trauma I suffer. I get

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asked all the time to do things (in support of mental health) — and I'm fine doing it, but don't ask me to go there. It's too much.

J.Z.: So when you read about James Chasse, and Aaron Campbell, and others who are clearly dealing with mental health issues, who are dying on the streets, what's your response to that?

S.L.: I think mental illness is the most prevalent that we see of folks on the street, but it's really all of the medical and insurance industries in general that are creating this problem. People have lost their homes because a loved one got cancer and they're trying to keep their loved one alive, and they lose everything. It's disgusting... We all want to be healthy and you have to pay a price to afford, if God forbid if something happened to you.

J.Z.: When these tragedies happen on the streets, a lot of people focus attention on the police, the training, the situation. You look back at an industry and a system that created this?

S.L.: It's like the perfect storm of bad is happening. We do need to train our police better, we do need more funding for our schools, and our police — and we certainly need to overhaul the health system and absolutely the insurance companies.

J.Z.: They're the only ones who don't need more money.

S.L.: For fuck's sake — seriously! It's such a big multi-tentacled problem, and that's when I rage at myself for being a stupid

musician and all I can do is sing to try to raise money to help a family, or sing to help the kids in Haiti. I wish I could swing a hammer. I wish I were more versed in legislation. I wish I knew law. I wish I could fight. I have a lot of friends who do, and I support them the best I can. It's just really easy and it's human nature for us to go, "That cop! Fuck that cop!" I have a friend who lives next door to that cop and can you imagine being him and living with that? I'm sure a lot of people would go, "Fuck him. I hope he suffers forever." I pray for that man. He has a family. He did what he was trained to do, and now he has to live with the consequences. And maybe he'll get a slap on the wrist.

I have to say (City Commissioner) Dan Saltzman is doing a really good job of

addressing this. He is not educated in law enforcement. He inherited this issue. And he took it on.

Portland has always had a terrible reputation for "shoot first, ask questions later." Dan is at the reins right now and he's in the news a lot because he's actually trying to address it and do something. He's bringing in the FBI for investigations, and he's confronting the problem, even though it's not his skill set.

J.Z.: Every summer we get the influx of kids, the whole West Coast rail riders. Every summer it's the same discussion but this year it seems like people are really worried.

S.L.: When I was young, I was running away and I was squatting and trying to be a little dirtball, and begging for change and being spit on and sometimes getting money and getting fed and getting places to stay.

I think I started 15, or 16, typical age. We lived in Southborough Mass. I would hitchhike or take the bus out to Boston, and I would squat in Cambridge, and if I could get laid I could stay, sleeping with someone, or someone who had drugs, I would stay there. But I had heard that in the shelter system, girls would get raped, so I would never stay there. I'm not saying that that's the case here. But that's the news I got.

But I could always go home. Not that home was awesome. I wasn't being beaten and I wasn't being starved. I was ignored. When my mom was home I would get poisoned a little bit, when I was really little.

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