

FOGO Episode 6 “Into the Thicket”
Transcription:

{{Sound cues}}

{{ The sound of the ocean and waves fade in, waves splashing}}

Ivy Le, Narrating:

“A few months before my parents came ashore on Bidong Island, a refugee camp off the coast of Malaysia, it was the most densely populated place on earth. The camp had an official capacity of 45 hundred, but in summer of 1979, there were about 40,000 Vietnamese refugees staying on the habitable area about the size of a football field.

Some international observers called the place “Hell Isle,” like the headline of TripAdvisor review for refugee camps. Sanitation: 1 star. Makeshift shelters, 2 stars for *character*.

But the refugees there had solidarity and helped each other where they could. My mom, looking back on living there – when she had escaped the stress of the wars, but before her troubles began in America. She says it was one of the happier periods of her life actually. She liked being by the sea. My parents’ boat had a lot of unaccompanied children, as we call them today. They took responsibility for the kids when they got to the camp, so they needed more supplies than my parents were issued. To make up for this, my father hid a wooden board high up in the trees. He would climb the trees on the island to pick fruit, but instead of eating it, he floated out on the board toward ships in the bay and sold the fruit to sailors. With currency, my parents could get all the supplies they needed, not just food.”

{{ Waves fade out, night time nature sounds come in}}

Ivy Le, narrating:

“I know, as sure as I exist, that my ancestors are always leaving boards in the trees for me. Stowing away support wherever I will end up needing it, like Hot Asian REI Brian appearing out of nowhere to help me along my journey in episode 4. Some people have intergenerational wealth, but my ancestors don’t leave money in the trees, y’know, cause they’re not stupid, they’d get robbed. But they leave boards and taught me to be resourceful, so I’d know them when I see them. So even when I’m somewhere that scares me, or I’m doing something I don’t know how it turns out, I keep my eyes open and I have faith I’ll find what I need to get through it.”

{{ Theme music fades in, trills and gets louder}}

Ivy Le, narrating:

“This is Ivy Le with one E and you’re listening to FOGO: Fear of Going Outside, where I venture to find out what’s so great about the outdoors. Last time on FOGO, an indigenous outdoor activist put it on me to reclaim a relationship to the land. One that was severed due to my family’s history of movement. To understand what land even is in that context, I felt I needed to go someplace without trails and designated campsites to see it for myself. After the break: I survive going where most outdoor people have never been. Oh, I hope my survival isn’t too much of a spoiler. “

{{ Theme music fades out, drum beat comes in, cymbals crash }}

{{Outdoor noises, birds squawking}}

Ivy Le, narrating:

“Last time on FOGO, indigenous outdoor activist Rocio Villalobos dramatically changed my perspective on what it means to venture outside. She made me realize I lost my relationship with the land when my family immigrated. That’s why I don’t think I’m ready to go into nature and see the things I’ve marveled at through screens watching nature shows my whole life. But that relationship and familiarity is out there for me to reclaim for the benefit of myself and future generations. *But* I don’t really want a relationship with nature. I just wanted to hook up, with no strings attached. I want to go outside the way I want to see lots of places before I die.”

{{ Thematic music starts, strings getting louder}}

Ivy Le, narrating:

“I watch these nature shows, especially the documentaries with their great migration shots or heart-pounding prey vs. predator scenes, and a part of me longs to see them with my own eyes. I wanna know, are birds really that colorful in real life or is it editing? I wanna hear what sound a giraffe makes. I wanna learn to paint with the colors of the wind!”

{{ Music gets louder, horns sounds, harmonica comes in}}

Ivy Le, Narrating:

“But I didn’t know what to do next. You can’t just book a ticket to the wilderness on Expedia. But one day, after I did a standup set and plugged my podcast, a guy comes

up to me and says he builds trails for a living and that I should go out with his crew to really see some nature.”

{{music fades out, sound of phone line ringing}}

Ryan, a little muffled through the phone:

“Hey, how’s it going?”

Ivy Le:

“Hey Ryan! It’s good. So it’s pouring over here Austin and I checked the map, it looked like it might be pouring over there in Lakeway. And...I’m checking my sound equipment and getting ready to load up the car and everything with everything you told me... I just wanted to make sure... that we are still on?”

Ryan:

“Yeah, We’re out here marking trail right now.”

Ivy:

“Oh... oh awesome. Well, I am so excited to come see you...”

Ryan:

“Ok, I’ll send you a pin in just a minute.”

Ivy:

“Ok, alright. Thank you so much!”

Ryan:

“Alright, you’re welcome”

Ivy:

“Ok, bye.”

{{ phone call disconnects }}

Ivy Le, to herself:

“... I guess we’re still on...”

{{ funky guitar music comes in, fades out }}

Ivy Le, narrating:

“So he confirmed we were on for the unmarked woods! So it was time to start my anxiety procrastination ritual. I had ignored my emotions until it was the time a reasonable and punctual person would have left her house. But I stress cooked some sushi rolls, packed up like a tornado, and left about an hour after our appointed meeting time, when it was clear that I would not be saved from my commitment by a stroke or a heart attack.

Some version of this poorly managing my time and emotions has actually taken place every time I’ve had to go outside for FOGO. This was just the worst, because Ryan’s worksite is over an hour from where I live.”

{{ outdoor sounds comes in, rustling starts, walking sounds }}

Ivy Le, navigating through the outdoors:

“Hello. Okay, I am no longer on the concrete. I’m looking down at the ground. Yeah, it's wet. I'm definitely regretting forgetting my boots when I rushed to get out of the house. There. These are... These are no joke trees. Okay, you look ... you trees look like you've seen a lot. You trees look like you're - Whoa, whoa! I think that's a real cactus. Okay, maybe I should stop walking until someone finds me.”

Ivy Le, narrating:

“Here I am, on the edge of wilderness. Behind me was a crop of brand new Mc-Mansions and construction sites. And in front of me, wild land. Well, at least as wild as land has been inhabited for 10,000 years can get. It's hard to describe a place just full of plants. But I'll let an expert explain it. You'll hear more from her next week. But this is Leslie Uppinghouse, a horticulturalist and lepidopterist on staff at the Ladybird Wildflower Center, Texas's Botanic Gardens.”

Leslie Uppinghouse:

“So in the woods of Texas, you don't have just ground and trees, you have these layers, right? So you have ground covers of trees and shrubs and then understory trees, and then big trees. And so that's what you would call a thicket. So a lot of wildlife can hide in the thickets like your birds and your small mammals.”

Ivy Le, narrating:

“You hear that?! Lots of wildlife hiding here, which I already intuited. That's why I'm standing here waiting for Ryan to come get me.”

Ryan:

“My name is Ryan Speights. I am the owner of S&S Trail services.”

Ivy Le, narrating:

“Ryan's a chill Texas guy. He races mountain bikes. He loves nature, and his social media page is just a love letter to Dr. Pepper and Whataburger. He's wearing light brown work pants, a dark green sweat-wicking S&S trails t-shirt, sunglasses and a baseball cap. I'm wearing a dark blue camisole because it's hot and humid and long white pinstripe pants because he told me to wear long pants and that's what I wear to work. I think they're from the Ann Taylor Outlet Store. Oh, and he's a ginger. Can I say that? I'm gleaning from all that Prince Harry stuff that gingers are a ... different kind of white. But I don't ask him about it. I haven't figured it out yet. If that's a racist thing to say out loud.”

Ivy:

“Like how did you get into nature stuff ?”

Ryan:

“So I've raced mountain bikes for a really long time and as a mountain bike racer in Texas, if you're doing really well in the state series, they offer an opportunity to get extra points by doing trail work. So I would go out on weekends and do volunteering to build trails and places where to clean up trails. And after a few years of doing volunteer trail work like that, my partner at the time, and I decided that we could probably do it for a living.”

Ivy Le, narrating:

“So mountain bikers. Have you seen mountain biking videos? Mountain bikers ride on extremely bumpy trails jackhammering their genitals with their bikes for the thrill of plummeting downhill in a game of chicken with death. But we both like Dr. Pepper, and that will have to be enough common ground for today, we're going into the thicket of it.”

Ryan:

“So the flagging you saw up at the top kind of goes off in the distance out that direction, and then comes back in, you can see the flag and the tree over there comes below us. And then we're going to build a bridge across the creek down here. So right now it goes really steep down into the creek and really steep out of it, which is gonna cause erosion on both sides. And as you saw, it's really hard to get up and down. So we're trying to level things out and make it easier and also provide a nice focal point of having a bridge so that you can stand on the bridge over the creek and take a look at it. So do you want to look at where the bridge is gonna be? Because that's new trail, or do you want to

see... uh.. my guys are off that direction flagging. So we can walk over and say hi to them in a minute and you can see what it's like when we haven't even seen a place."

Ivy:

"Let's do that then."

Ryan:

"I'll take you along the corridor of what we flagged."

Ivy:

"Okay."

Ryan:

"It means walking through brush."

Ivy:

"You mean like walking through brush now?"

Ryan:

"Yeah."

Ivy:

"Okay. Cool. Slimy"

{{ Ivy is breathing a little heavier here, you hear movement through brush }}

Ivy:

"I feel like Catherine Zeta Jones in that heist movie."

{{ Ryan laughs}}

Ryan:

"Trying to duck under things."

Ivy:

"Yeah. Trying to duck under all the lasers."

{{Birds chirping, nature sounds}}

Ivy Le, narrating:

“Ryan and I are not hiking because hiking, as we have learned, is just walking in nature. We're not walking. What we're doing is more like climbing horizontally, not even horizontally because we aren't going uphill. Ryan said the guys on his team have all fallen down these inclines already. It's more than twice as steep as any trail would be. There is no obvious place where you're supposed to put your foot. We're looking down but you can't really see the ground. It's covered with layers of plants and branches. The animals I've seen so far, mostly bugs, I saw some snails and even cockroaches, which funny enough are much smaller and more timid out here than in the city. But I don't let the itty-bitty field roaches fool me. I stay vigilant.”

{{ outdoor whistle and horn sounds}}

Ivy:

“So I have to look out for um frogs and snakes. Here. OOO.. little bridge of fallen trees. Okay, okay. Oh, okay.”

{{ Ivy is making noise of discomfort as we here outdoor rustling noises }}

Ryan:

“Why are we worried about frogs?”

Ivy:

“Because a nature educator that I... that I interviewed, she told me that where there's frogs there's snakes.”

Ryan:

“I can see why that would be a good association to have. Um. We run into snakes rather randomly. So they can be anywhere on the hillside. Uh. And it depends on which kind of snake you're talking about. So the place that I most frequently saw rattlesnakes last year was in San Antonio and we were sort of near a creek, but we were nowhere near where frogs would be. And we'd set like... we would cut a section of a trail and turn around and there'd be a rattlesnake in the middle of it.”

Ivy:

“Then I guess I just wanted the water or did it want blood?”

Ryan:

“I think it was hunting and just happened to be laying in the middle of the trail because it could see better. Uh and Joe came across one when he was working with hand tools.

So we'd run the machine through the day before and it was the next morning and he was kind of working along doing our cleanup work and he heard something rattle and so he stopped and he looked and there was a small rattlesnake about four feet away from him."

Ivy:

"Four feet?"

Ryan:

"Yeah."

Ivy:

"So, what do you do?"

Ryan:

"Backed away from it."

Ivy:

"Just go backwards?"

Ryan:

"Yep."

Ivy:

"Like... What if there's a snake... Do they travel in packs? Like what if there's a snake right behind you? Then you just back into another one?"

{{ Ryan chuckles}}

Ryan:

"They usually don't travel in groups. Uh..rattlesnakes are fairly solitary."

Ivy:

"Okay."

Ryan:

"Um most snakes are fairly solitary unless they're like in the middle of their mating season and then you might find a couple of them."

Ivy:

"Okay."

Ryan:

“But it's pretty rare that we see more than one at a time.”

Ivy:

“Okay. Okay, that helps. No one told me that they're always like, just back up. But I'm like, I didn't see the one in front of me and you're gonna want me to walk backwards?”

Ryan:

“But you didn't see the one in front of you if you're backing up.”

Ivy:

“Right. But like... like barely, like saw it. Like if you saw it then I wouldn't be like four feet in front of it, if I'd seen it the first time.”

Ryan:

“Yeah, I mean. There are times that like they hide so well that you're on top of them before you'd be able to see it. That actually happened to me the other day, close to here. I was walking uphill to where everybody else was working. And I stopped. And then I saw the snake.”

{{Suspenseful music comes in}}

“So it wasn't even like I recognized that there was a snake, just something in my brain told me to stop.”

{{ Suspenseful music gets a little louder}}

Ivy Le, narrating:

“Do I have this in my brain? Did my ancestors leave this ability in my genetic code so that I may live? I mean, they might have. Once, I felt a presence in the bathroom in the middle of the night. I listened to my creepy feeling and turned on the light, which I never need to do in my own place, and a giant cockroach scurried from the underside of the toilet seat!”

{{ Suspenseful music abruptly stops}}

“The toilet seat where I was about to sit, fully exposed to its antenna. I was shaken, but I thought, if I could sense the life force of a cockroach, surely, I could sense a serial killer before it was too late and that was an important thing to learn about myself! And now, I feel if I could sense a possible serial killer in the shadows, surely I could sense a snake in my vicinity. So Ryan is giving me faith in my ability to survive a snake encounter in his own way, as everyone I've met has so far. Of course, I can't know with certainty how I'd react to a snake until I see one, which is not comforting. But snakes are not the only thing to worry about out here.”

{{ Suspenseful music fades in, nature sounds in the background }}

Ivy:

“I mean, what kind of mammals do we have out here... besides us?”

Ryan:

“We know that there's us, there's deer. There's some foxes. skunks, different kinds of squirrels. There's probably bobcats.”

Ivy:

“Right here. There's probably bobcats here.”

{{ Suspenseful violins }}

Ryan:

“Yeah. I mean people have seen them in the neighborhood like in their front yards.”

{{ Ivy Gasps}}

Ivy:

“Fuck!”

{{ Ryan chuckles }}

Ryan:

“They're not around us right now.”

Ivy:

“You don't know that. I would not be a loud bobcat if I saw easy prey chilling out.”

Ryan:

“Which we're way too big for a bobcat to try to eat.”

Ivy:

“I think, I think nothing's too big to try. Like nothing, no goal is too large to attempt.”

Ryan:

“Well, okay, as philosophical beings, we have different ideas than a bobcat does. Cause the bobcats' like, I need to eat and if I waste a bunch of energy trying to kill something that's four times bigger than me, then I may not be able to kill it, I may not be able to eat it. They want to go for like, small, easy prey. Typically, that's why mountain lions attack people in the wild is there, the mountain lion itself is diseased or is super hungry. So they're sort of desperate at that point. So they go for a foe that they wouldn't normally pick out. So you hear like mountain lions, you know, attacking... there was a runner in Colorado, either earlier this year, or last year, that got attacked. And when they went and found the body, it was way malnourished, and it was undersized. And so that was like its last ditch effort. So the likelihood of you coming across that is more slim than the likelihood of getting struck by lightning.”

Ivy:

“Right. But then, but if it happens to you like you're gonna have to fight it to the death with your bare hands.”

Ryan:

“Yes. And the guy did.”

Ivy:

“Yeah.”

Ryan:

“Yeah, you will definitely have to defend yourself. I recommend going for the eyes. Our biggest threat out here typically on an average workday is honestly, bees.”

Ivy Le, narrating:

“I’m sorry but does anyone believe that bees are more of a problem than bobcats?! I learned on a nature show when I was a kid. I’ve been watching nature shows for a very long time and if it’s on one, it must be true. I learned that bees are not incentivized to hurt you. Because if they sting you, they’ll die. So as long as you stay calm, and don’t freak them out, you’ll be good, right? Ryan told me later that his team uses the word bees as a catchall for wasps, hornets and yellow jackets. They don’t mean honeybees, which are chill. But in that moment, before he could explain all that, Ryan stopped talking. He was checking something out, but I couldn’t see what.”

{{ Bass playing, smooth jazzy beat comes in, fades out}}

Ryan:

“So before telling you this, I’ve looked around a whole bunch...”

Ivy:

“Uh huh.”

Ryan:

“But this area with all the limbs and everything down...”

Ivy:

“Uh huh.”

Ryan:

“This is where you’re most likely to see a snake.”

Ivy:

“...Awesome.”

Ryan:

“Uhh..Cause they can hide in all this loose stuff pretty easily.”

Ivy:

“...Okay.”

Ryan:

“Um, rattlesnakes like to hide under rocks and ledges and things.”

Ivy:

“Uh huh. Okay, so I'm going through this tree graveyard where snakes live. That's awesome.

{{Ivy breathing heavily}} That's awesome... Nothing creepy about this at all.”

{{ Ivy's breathing gets heavier}}

Ivy:

“Ok...ok...”

Ryan:

“You haven't died yet. “

Ivy:

“Okay.”

Ryan:

“For somebody with a fear of the outdoors, you're actually being really brave.”

{{ Ivy breathing heavy, stifled laughter}}

Ivy:

“This fucking sucks, Ryan! This fucking sucks. It's like every time I give myself enough, like presence to be like, ok, stop looking at your feet. Just stand up straight and take a breath in and look around you for a second. I'm like, a centimeter away from a plant stabbing me in the eye.”

Ryan:

“Yeah, so you notice I'm wearing glasses. All my guys are wearing glasses all the time. It's just so that we can protect our faces.”

Ivy:

“I put in my contacts, specifically incase I had to fight a bobcat.”

Ryan:

“I mean, that's fair.”

Ivy Le, narrating:

“After an hour in the woods, going forward, one shaky foot placement at a time.

{{ FOGO Theme Music}}

I'm really hoping we're close to reaching the rest of Ryan's team. I'm not sure how much longer I can take this. But after the break, we finally learned about these relentless bees and it is so much worse than I imagined!"

Unidentified voice:

"Bees will follow you, half the length of a golf course!"

Ivy:

"Golf courses as a measurement don't mean anything to me."

{{ Theme music swells, repeats and gets louder, then fades out }}

{{ Horns make funky sound }}

Ivy Le, narrating:

"Now we're into the woods. We are getting close to where Ryan's team is working. I'm in the middle of a very steep incline with a single foothold with one patent leather Birkenstock sandal. There is nowhere to even squat that is not slimy or pokey or alive. The ground is covered in tree fall or fallen dead trees. Because the trees here have mostly fallen, I can actually see that this steep space goes down for at least 30 feet, which in city terms equals a three story apartment building. And I can hear water trickling in the bottom of all this somewhere because it's been raining but I can't see it. And I don't hear Lil Nas X crooning. So I know it can't go that far down. Ryan stops to point out a particular tree. That's very much alive."

Ryan:

"There's a tree over there that's got like an orange bark on it. It's a little bit taller than you are."

Ivy:

"Okay, with those like super shiny leaves?"

Ryan:

"Yes, the super shiny leaves. That is a madrone tree."

Ivy:

"A madrone tree?"

Ryan:

“Yes. And they're fairly rare. We don't have a lot of places where we find them growing. And they get as tall as some of the cedar trees here if they're hundreds of years old. So that one's probably like 15 or 20 years old. But it's a fairly rare plant. But you can see what the flags are, we actually moved away from it to allow it some room to grow and get bigger.”

Ivy:

“Ahh.”

Ryan:

“And if we have a plant that we want to protect, that's right on the edge of the trail, then people tend to walk over and touch it a bunch, because they realize like, *“Oh, that's something special. It's different than what I've seen.”* And then, that kills the plant.”

Ivy:

“That's... that's a very counterintuitive thing to do. Do people really do that?”

Ryan:

“Yeah. People will walk up, like, if you put a sign in front of a plant that identifies what it is that plant will die, because everybody's gonna want to touch it.

Ivy:

“Huh.”

Ryan:

“For some reason, I don't... Its, yeah, it's weird human psychology.”

Ivy Le, narrating:

“It's hard for me to imagine that there are so many people who just touch things without knowing whether they're allergic to them or not. So many people like that, that it's fatal for a rare tree to stand out to humans. I just don't understand people sometimes. Even humans get hurt standing out to other humans. We're the worst!”

{{ soft, introspective music comes in}}

“Maybe I'm projecting. I'm eccentric. I know it. The universe never lets me forget that I'm different. Okay, but I am so happy things are a little better now. And I want young, wondrously weird and curious people to thrive and bring the food their parents cooked to school, dye their hair and destroy the carceral state. And I'll do anything the next

generation wants me to do to support, because things haven't changed enough. My mother taught me in elementary school to hide my intelligence, because it made me a target. People will come after you if they know she said, I had to hide like a board in the tree. My mom never said that to my brothers. I'm not sure if it's because I'm female or if I'm just so much smarter than them that it didn't need saying. When I was a kid and grownups would ask me what I wanted to be when I grow up, I told them, President of the United States. I got to see a lot of injustice growing up and I thought if I could be president, I could fix it. I was a kid, I only knew like four jobs. And older Vietnamese people would laugh in my face. They survived wars, plural. They don't give a fuck about a weird kids dreams. I was told explicitly that America would never elect someone who looked like me. And even if they did, I'd get assassinated. That's what we would do too to the shiny tree, If Ryan doesn't hide it."

{{ introspective music fades back in }}

"I have been the first or second minority that wasn't support staff at nearly every place I've ever worked. And when my parents see who I work with at a new job, they get somber, and say, I have to do a great job because if I fuck it up, they will never hire another person of color again."

{{ harp strings trill }}

"There's a saying that the nail that sticks out gets hammered. But it's more like being screwed. Slowly, tightly, constantly down and down into the earth from whence you came. I don't touch the tree."

Ryan:

"Yeah, it's just rare, so it's more special."

Ivy:

"Okay. Okay. Hey madrone."

{{ somber music fades back in, piano keys trill then fade out }}

Ryan, yelling:

"You want to walk back this way for a sec?!"

Unidentified person: "No!"

Ivy:

"I feel like we're gonna be kind of stuck here."

Ryan:

"Well, I'm bringing them back so that you don't have to go all the way out across the steep section. Because if you fall here, it's like a good 15 or 20 feet before you're gonna stop."

Ivy:

"Okay, okay that's fine then. Then we'll wait."

Unidentified voice: "Polo!"

Ivy:

"Marco!!"

Unidentified voice: "Polo!"

Ivy:

"Marco!"

{{ Ivy giggles }}

Unidentified voice:

"Just trynaWe were told to walk backwards...."

Ryan:

"Are you? Are you uphill of us, Shawn?"

Shawn:

"Yes."

Ryan:

"How far?"

Shawn:

"15 - 20 feet from the fence."

Ryan:

"Okay, so there's houses behind? Are you under the retaining wall?"

Shawn:

“Yeah.”

Ryan:

“Oh, nice. Okay.”

Ivy:

“Hey, what's this fruit that looks like balls?”

Ryan:

“Fruit that looks like balls?”

Ivy:

“Yeah.”

Ryan:

“Oh, these are Buckeye.”

Ivy:

“Okay.”

Ryan:

“So this is a Mexican Buckeye. There's three of them.”

Ivy:

“Oh, okay”

Ryan:

“It's like a triple ballsack.”

Ivy:

“Okay, yeah. When I looked from the back, it looks like a ball sack with just a very, very um...diminutive...nevermind...”

{{ Ivy and Ryan laugh }}

Ryan:

“Size queen.”

Ivy Le, narrating:

“Oh, yeah. This is what I meant by saying Ryan's a chill Texas guy. Ryan's an entrepreneur, but his business runs on trucks. He's not above a dirty joke. He's not above answering my stupidest questions. He's not above anything or anyone. He's what people really mean when you say someone's down to earth, and his crew is just as easy to talk to. I hear them long before I can see them because we're in the woods.”

{{ Bird squawk }}

“The voices you hear approaching are Shawn and Joe.”

Shawn:

“My name is Shawn Bigsby and I am a trail consultant for S&S trails.

Joe:

“Hi, I'm Joe Wells. I am a trail design specialist. I have a card, it says so.”

{{ Ivy giggles }}

Ryan:

“And Ivy is scared to death of the outdoors.”

Joe and Shawn in the background:

“Yeah. Oh, that's what your podcast is about, right?”

Ivy:

“Oh, yeah. Yeah.”

Joe and Shawn:

“Well you have joined the perfect crew.”

Ivy:

“Because, Is it a perfect crew, because you guys are like super understanding and used to also be afraid of the outdoors or a perfect crew because your...?”

Joe:

“We have a healthy respect for mother nature and everything she is capable of doing to us. By respecting her boundaries. She leaves us alone.”

Ivy:

“I okay, I fuck with that. I also have a very healthy respect is how I would describe it.”

Joe:

“Yeah.”

Ivy Le, narrating:

“Shawn and Joe are dressed pretty much like Ryan but one stockier than him, and one's tall and lanky. Neither are gingers. They're still stopping to measure the incline at intervals as they approach us because they're working and this is unexplored land. And eventually they find a rock to sit on, maybe eight yards downhill for me. They can't get any closer because there are no footholds. One takes out a vape pen while he talked to me about their work. It makes sense. Lighters and cigarette butts would be a terrible idea for people who work around this much wood. This much tree? Is it rude to call them wood when they're still alive?”

Ryan:

“I'm gonna reiterate what I said earlier. Hey, Shawn, what's the worst thing about this job?”

Shawn and Joe:

“Bees. Bees.”

{{ Sound of bees buzzing comes in }}

Ryan:

“Told you.”

Shawn:

“You're walking along and you either dig and you hit a rock or you hit a tree and all sudden you hear a buzz and there's thousands of things near you that follow you. Everything else stays where it is. Bees will follow you half the length of a golf course.”

Ivy:

“Golf courses as a measurement don't... don't mean anything to me.”

Ryan:

“Sorry...That's 300 yards, 400 yards.”

Shawn:

“That's my best memory because the first time I got my 12,13 stings was... we were working in an area like this between golf holes and we were short cutting up a hill and I

stepped in a bee's nest and I felt a pinch and I'm like, *ooh I hit a spike*. Because it was a really..."

{{ serious thematic music comes in}}

Ryan:

"It was in Laredo. So everything down there pokes you."

Joe:

"Everything."

{{ Ivy laughs}}

Shawn:

"Everything. There's degrees of pain going through there. So it was just like, *Oh, I hit a thorn. Ok, oh I hit another thorn. I must be in a really bad...* And then I heard the hum. And I'm like no, I'm being stung and I ran uphill shedding things accidentally. And then I got up into the golf to the golf hole, and was throwing my pack off and I'm like, ok....ok I'm alright. OW! OW! OW! No, I'm not. I grabbed and I just ran until I was done stinging, and then I dropped my pack and took a bunch of Benadryl and it was kind of out of it for the rest of the day."

Joe:

"Yeah, he was loopy."

Ryan:

"So if you haven't been stung, then you probably need to carry an epipen with you just in case, cause you're going to spend a lot of time outside."

Ivy Le, narrating:

"The problem of hornet's nests in the ground cements my plan to specifically seek out an allergy specialist when I go get medically cleared to camp later. If these guys don't always see them. I don't think I would."

Ryan:

"We always have an escape plan, like, we know where the nearest emergency room is that sort of thing. So when we first go to a new job site, we sort of lay everything out like this is where the hospital is, this is where we're getting our fuel from. This is the nearest place to go get something to eat, or whatever if we need to. We know who our contacts

are with the land management agency, that sort of thing. So everybody has all that information.”

Ivy Le, narrating:

“These guys reminded me a lot of friends and family who've worked construction. A trail build is a construction site. Construction sites are dangerous, whether you're making a road or a building or a trail. Once my dad cut his foot on a miter saw, and he yelled for me to go get my mom while he tried to hold his foot together with one hand and gathered sawdust to throw on it with the other. If you work in construction, day in and day out, you might get lazy some days and not do every step of every safety protocol. But you have also probably gotten seriously injured at some point. Danger is not in their heads. It's all around them. It's clear that these guys don't think my preoccupation with danger is too much at all. They just want me to know what the real dangers are. And they know what those are from experience.”

Ryan:

“There are days where somebody is assigned a task of checking radar every 20 minutes or 30 minutes, so that we know how quickly a storm is coming. So there are situations that we get into where we are very, very aware of what's going on around us. And that's actually gotten way better over the course of time that I've been doing this job. 15 years ago, we didn't all have smartphones. And you were more often an area without cell service than you were in an area with cell service. We still have job sites that we go to that nobody has cell service so you have no idea what's happening around you. And that's often more dangerous, then any of the plants and animals that we run into. Caprock Canyons, we were doing some scouting, and a storm came up with no warning. And before we got back to the car, our group got split up.”

{{ Thunder sounds }}

“And lightning struck a tree between all of us. And it was close enough that it knocked us to the ground. So there's this very distinct sound of like the energy rushing past you to get to where the lightnings gonna strike. And I got to experience that, and I never want to experience that again.”

Ivy:

“You're like...Well, back to work tomorrow. I learned nothing.”

{{ giggling }}

Ivy Le, narrating:

“Remember the rule of threes? You can only survive in inclement weather without shelter for three hours. And even if you have shelter, they also told me you have to listen for falling trees.”

{{ Horns come in }}

“I hadn't checked the weather before hiking with Rocio. But after these stories, I will never make that mistake again.”

{{ Horn trills, fades out }}

“The team needs to take their lunch break. So we look for a way back that all four of us would be able to take like as in a way that I could take in sandals. This area is still like unexplored to them. So it's a bit hard to hear. But the guys ahead of us are making note still of stone along the potential path, calling them either planet or rock.”

{{ outdoor rustling sounds }}

Shawn:

“I think it might be planet.”

Ryan:

“So the difference between rock and planet in our vernacular is, a rock will move. So like this is a rock.”

Ivy:

“Okay.”

Ryan:

“Planet means it's like a rock shelf that goes under the ground for hundreds of yards and there's no way we can ever move it.”

Ivy:

“I like that rock versus planet. Is this a rock, or is it a planet? I feel that way about like life problems, you know?”

{{ laughter }}

Ryan:

“Right.”

Ivy:

“Like, I'm short. That's a planet.”

{{ Ryan laughs }}

{{ rustling sounds of outdoor movement and brush }}

{{ Ivy starts breathing heavier}}

Ivy:

"I don't know how to use all my sound equipment yet. Right? That's a rock."

Ryan:

"Right, because you can move it."

Ivy:

"Yeah EW! EW! EW! EW! What did I just touch?"

Ryan:

"It just rotten tree."

Ivy:

"Ew!"

{{ Ivy shrieks }}

Ivy:

"What's this blue egg stuff in here?"

Ryan:

"Oh, those are juniper berries."

Ivy:

"Oh, okay. Okay, that's much less threatening than it felt like. It's like did I just catch an alien disease?"

{{ Ryan laughs }}

Ryan:

"Probably not, but I'm not guaranteeing anything."

{{ Ivy deep sighs }}

Ivy:

“Rock, planet, other planet. Okay.”

Ivy Le, narrating:

“These juniper berries were so alarmingly blue. The brightest colored thing I've seen out here and they were covered in slime for some reason! Uhhh!”

{{ Cymbals sound }}

“There's so much slime to explain in nature y'all. But the color and the slime and the size. It looked like giant blue alien fish eggs, like a piece of blue akira nigiri made for Godzilla. It was surreal to encounter something from another dimension here an hour's drive from home. I'm not afraid of juniper berries. I drink gin. But trust me if you stuck your hand in this, you would've screamed too. Even The Rock would have yelped like a little bitch”.

{{ music trills }}

“Vin Diesel would have fainted.”

{{ cymbals fade out }}

“Going back is a lot easier than getting out here was. And they point out more plants and rock v. planet features as we go along. We were so far out and away from technology. You can hear as soon as we hit the road all the guy's phones start dinging with notifications.”

Ryan:

“You walked through the woods and you made it back.”

{{ Ivy laughs }}

Joe:

“She didn't just walk through the woods, she went through raw nature. Like not “oh, I was a on a trail...” No, you went through raw, untouched, uncut nature. A lot of people can't say they've done that.”

Ivy:

“Well, we're gonna see in the car if um...any rashes develop.”

{{ Awkward swirly sound }}

Ryan:

“You went maybe a quarter of a mile.”

Ivy:

“That was it?”

{{ Ivy takes a deep breath }}

Ryan:

“Yeah.”

Ivy:

“Okay.”

{{ laughs }}

Shawn:

“But this is about as rough stuff you'll ever find. It's steep. There's a lot of pokey plants.... A lot of bugs....”

Ryan:

“Yeah, I threw you into the deep end.”

{{brass theme music begins}}

Ivy Le, narrating:

“I believe Ryan, but it did really feel further than a quarter mile. But it's okay. This is just the beginning. I've asked every nature expert I've talked to how they got into nature and not a single one said they started with a whole mile into the woods. I go back to my car, hot and tired but no injuries and only minor bug bites. I start blasting the music and AC and I do feel proud of myself for practicing the things I've learned so far. Even when I fell a little short. I kept my eyes open for frogs and snakes, for example, like Diane said and I remembered her rule of three. I was prepared with water and snacks, which Rocio does for her hikes. I tried to remember the camping mantra Adam helped me come up with. It was, “This is not that bad. This is not that bad.” But it came out, “This sucks, Ryan this fucking sucks.” So I make a note to practice the mantra more.”

{{ Horns sound, fade out }}

“Coming out here also made me realize what I still don't know. Bugs are a much bigger safety issue than I'd realized, according to the guys, so I need to study up somehow. And there are a lot more plants in the wild than I could imagine. I am honestly both relieved and disappointed that I didn't see any animals. I saw bugs like I said, but not like real animals. Now we'll have to cut that later. We cannot afford to get canceled by entomologist twitter. We're a nature show. Almost every animal on earth is a bug. Being in the nature show is different from consuming a nature show. I mean, just like everyone else, I always watched the behind the scenes feature after finishing a nature documentary, so I shouldn't have expected to see a real wild animal in only two hours outside. It took three Our Planet cameramen two years in the subarctic forest to get 8 seconds of Siberian tiger footage. It isn't logical. But I did think it was going to happen. That expectation made me late to arrive. But it also gave me adrenaline for the expedition too. I then remembered what the guy said when I told him I was kind of surprised not to have seen any bobcats, snakes or even an armadillo.”

Ivy:

“Yeah, like I hardly saw any animals.”

Shawn:

“They're afraid of you. Everything's trying to get away from you as quickly as possible.

Joe:

“So by you just walking around and making noise, they're scurrying away from you. And just as much as you see it, and you want to run from it, it does the same thing.”

Ivy:

Does it know that I'm a primate and that, like, therefore I'm probably like sketchy and dangerous, or do I need to like be like a scary animal?”

{{ Ivy makes weird animal noises }}

Joe:

“You're bigger than it and you make noise. That's all they care about”

Ryan:

“You're bigger than it and so therefore they're afraid.”

Ivy:

“Okay.”

{{ Outdoor bird sounds }}

Joe:

Okay, and you're not trying to hide. You're making a lot of noise, like just talking and breaking through things. It's like, Oh, that's a predator that doesn't care what's around it. It's going to be scarier than me. I need to get out.”

{{ Cymbals fade in }}

Ivy Le, narrating:

“The reason I didn't encounter any dangerous animals is because of me. I am an apex predator. Some people tell you you should see yourself the way your friends see you. I need to see myself the way small woodland animals see me. I am powerful. I sound ferocious. Me. I walk up in the woods like someone who doesn't give a fuck. The fact that I wasn't hiding was what protected me out here. I have learned a lot today. That's why I have been doing all this to learn things because I think learning things will move all the rocks between me and the outdoors. But the fact that I am an apex predator, that's planet.

{{FOGO Theme music comes in}}

Let's do this. Next time on FOGO...

Ivy:

So do you think I'm prepared to go camping?

Leslie:

No, I don't think you're ready to go camping. Have you been camping?

Ivy Le:

Uhhh....

CREDITS

Please share this show with someone! Maybe someone who hates - or loves? - the outdoors! And get your “this is not that bad, this is not that bad” camping mantra travel mugs on fogopodcast.com.

FOGO: Fear of Going Outside is a Spotify Sound Up Series and was workshopped as part of the Spotify Sound Up Podcast Accelerator Program.

FOGO is written, hosted, and produced by me, Ivy Le, and produced and edited by Myrriah Gossett.

Music by Michelangelo Rodriguez. You can find FOGO's soundtrack on his Spotify artist profile!

FOGO is engineered and mixed by Robyn Edgar, with additional story editing by Aira Juliet and Minda Wei. Production support by Benjamin Grosse-Siestrup.

You can learn more about Ryan's company, S&S Trails at sstrails.com.

FOGO's board of advisors is Jeff Zhao and Martin Thomas.

From Spotify, our Executive Producers are Gina Delvac, Candace Manriquez Wrenn, Andrea Silenzi, Natalie Tulloch, and Jane Zumwalt.

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Listen to FOGO: Fear of Going Outside for free on Spotify!

You can follow me on Twitter and TikTok @IvyLeWithOneE, the phrase all spelled out, or visit @fogopodcast on Instagram to see pictures of the ball sack buckeyes from this episode.

{{music fades out, nature sounds come back in}}

Ivy:

"Well, that's that a snail? Or is that a chrysalis?"

Ryan:

"That's a snail. snail."

Ivy:

"He must not be one of the ones I eat or I woulda recognize you. Right away."