

# Ologiesology with Alie Ward

## Ologies Podcast

### October 4, 2018

Heeey, it's your favorite cat lady, Steven Ray Morris, *Ologies* editor, unboxing video connoisseur, and corndog zealot, bringing you today a very special episode of *Ologies*. This week we're turning the mic on your host with the most, Alie Ward, to interview her about her time making this podcast and more.

Now a bit of history. I discovered Alie Ward after seeing her with Georgia Hardstark on the Meltdown stage, I'm pretty sure, July 3rd, 2013. I looked it up. I immediately subscribed, of course. *Slumber Party* was the first podcast I'd ever subscribed to in my Apple podcast app. A little over a year later in 2014, I was lucky to meet Alie at a live *Slumber Party* show. She's charming, hilarious, curious, and open-hearted. She inspires me every day.

As I got involved in the local Los Angeles podcasting scene, we connected over a mutual love of natural history museums and science in general. So, while I started producing podcasts and hosting on my own, I got wind of *Ologies* brewing and wanted to be part of it. However, before we dive into Alie's journey and how *Ologies* came together, I wanted to get some business out of the way. Supporting *Ologies* on Patreon at [Patreon.com/Ologies](https://Patreon.com/Ologies), even a dollar goes a long way to making the show the best it could possibly be. Plus, there's tons of new merch in the *Ologies* store, [OlogiesMerch.com](https://OlogiesMerch.com).

Today's subject, DadWard herself, has her very own show premiering on the CW Network this Saturday morning, October 6th, called *Did I Mention Invention?* Which, to quote, "Will bring viewers fascinating stories of invention while shining a light on everyday innovators." Sounds pretty neat to me. Check your local listings, of course. I know all Ologites have already carved out some time Saturday to get their DIMI on (that's *Did I Mention Invention*). That rolls off the tongue, right?

Okay, Ologiesology, or Alieology as I want to call it, eh? Eh? In this episode, Alie and I sat in her Closet of Wonders to chat about her path to *Ologies*, answering your Patreon-submitted questions and some of my own. We talked about natural history museum epiphanies, the nuts and bolts of putting an *Ologies* episode together, and the importance of science advocacy. Plus, we also talked about manifesting your passions, being vulnerable, and more. So now without further ado, it's my pleasure to reintroduce your sports stats-obsessed cousin/Grandma's new boyfriend/camp counselor/DadWard triumphant, Ologiesologist, Alie Ward.

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**Alie Ward:** It is recording.

**Steven Ray Morris:** Okay, cool.

**Alie:** I figured we would just hit the ground running.

**Steven:** Keep it going. All right. Are you ready?

**Alie:** Kind of...

**Steven:** Okay.

**Alie:** This is... just contextually it's so weird for me to get so divulgey.

**Steven:** You're the... What was somebody saying, the Ologiesologist?

**Alie:** Ologiesologist. Sure, I study ologies. That's legit. It's a made-up word.

**Steven:** Yeah. Can you get a degree in studying how other people study?

**Alie:** I think I just need to get old enough and right before people think I'm going to die, someone gives me an honorary something to somewhere. Even if it's just, like, a Rancho Cordova Honorary Doctorate in Absolute Buffoonery. I'll take it.

**Steven:** Well, yeah, and then you get a postdoc in it as well.

**Alie:** [laughs] Post-honorary doc in buffoonery.

**Steven:** Yes. I mean, there's so many good questions to start with.

**Alie:** Thank you for doing this, Steven Ray Morris! Oh my god!

**Steven:** Of course. I'm excited. We haven't sat and talked on a podcast in a long time.

**Alie:** I know, since *The Purrrcast*.

**Steven:** Yes, which is one of the questions.

**Alie:** Is it?

**Steven:** Yeah. Let's see, excuse the noise of me shuffling papers. That was my favorite thing in the Egyptology episode, which is why I kept it in, where you're like, [makes paper shuffling noises] "CATS." Like, you had to stack all these papers and you're like, "Oh my gosh people have asked us a million questions."

**Alie:** So many cat questions.

**Steven:** Yeah. Rebecca Lynn Weisselberg said: Can you do a crossover with *The Purrrcast*?

**Alie:** Done it! Did it!

**Steven:** Yeah, checked off.

**Alie:** Have I only done one episode of *The Purrrcast* or did I do two?

**Steven:** No, it was the April Fool's episode.

**Alie:** Yeah, the mantis one, right?

**Steven:** Yeah, right. That was two April Fool's... no, one April Fool's ago, I think.

**Alie:** Right. It was 2017 April Fool's and we talked about owning a praying mantis as a pet.

**Steven:** Yes, which I want to do.

**Alie:** You should get one.

**Steven:** I don't know if you've thought about getting any new insects as pets since then?

**Alie:** Ever since I killed Mirabelle, I feel like... I think putting my toe into the motherly waters is scary.

**Steven:** You know, you just take it one step at a time. You get a few ants...

**Alie:** Actually, I'm working on ants today.

**Steven:** I know, I saw the email. Yeah, yeah.

**Alie:** Just two lonely ants. That's so sad.

**Steven:** But then they'll make more right?

**Alie:** No, they're all... Most of them are girls. They need a queen! They're just gonna be two lonely ants. It's like two bitches stuck in an airport, just, "I guess we're here now."

**Steven:** But I mean, they have the ant farm all to themselves.

**Alie:** Yeah, that's true.

**Steven:** What about a fish tank?

**Alie:** No dude.

**Steven:** Are you not a fish person?

**Alie:** Fish are fine, fish are fine.

**Steven:** They're not friends. They're fine. *[laughs]*

**Alie:** They're... At least with Mirabelle, I could take her out and she could crawl on my face and we would listen to Beyoncé together. But I feel like fish don't care about me. They're never going to care about me.

**Steven:** Or snails?

**Alie:** I could get a snail.

**Steven:** You could get a snail.

**Alie:** I can get a pet snail. But I'm not going to get a GAL. I'm not gonna get a Giant African Land snail.

**Steven:** No, well, that's illegal.

**Alie:** So illegal.

**Steven:** And then if they escape then it'll ruin the ecosystem.

**Alie:** The whole world will be covered in GALs.

**Steven:** Hell yeah.

**Alie:** No GAL's, no snails. I do kind of... all I want is a dog. Everyone who knows me knows all I want is a dog. And my whole life is just a steady march to own a house and get a dog. That's the only reason I do anything.

**Steven:** It's going to happen.

**Alie:** I feel like when I do it... what if I get there and I'm like, "I hate this dog."?

**Steven:** I mean...

**Alie:** What if that happens!?

**Steven:** I feel like it'll be... I mean, you'll be ready for it, you know? I mean, Sarah just adopted a new cat and it took her three years to work up to getting it.

**Alie:** I think I'm gonna love the dog no matter what. I'm just a little bit afraid of, what if I built it up so much?

**Steven:** Sure.

**Alie:** Do you know what I mean?

**Steven:** Yeah, *[facetiously]* I think you're not worrying about it.

**Alie:** I'm not worrying about it.

**Steven:** Yeah.

**Alie:** The day that I get a dog will be a very, very big day. I think I want to have a dog shower where I invite people, and I register for things, and people have to get me... I don't know, bowls and leashes and stuff.

**Steven:** Not the dog gifts, they get you the gifts.

**Alie:** They get the dog gifts, as if I were having a baby, like poop bags and stuff, and I just register at Petco.

**Steven:** Cute science-themed dog stuff.

**Alie:** I'm in it for the dog sweaters.

**Steven:** A whale costume or a dog shark costume.

**Alie:** Fuck, that would be great. That'd be so great. If I get a dog, I might register.

**Steven:** I'm going to start with this question because it's very straight to the point, which is, Jeffrey Katz wants to know: I would like to hear your weird backstory.

**Alie:** Oh my god! Oh boy. Okay. I'm going to do it in a real nutshell. So, I grew up the last of three girls. I'm pretty sure my parents were gunning for a boy, and so they were very supportive of us being as tomboy as we liked. There was not a lot of pressure to be, like, baby pageant girls. So, we just grew up romping around outside, and catching polliwogs, and looking at muskrats up in Sacramento. And they would just turn us... we were like free-range chickens, like "come back before sundown and don't get tetanus." That was pretty much the only rule.

And I always loved science and I always loved bugs, and nature, and stuff. But I also liked theater, dorky, stupid shit. And so I went to college and I couldn't decide if I should study film and art or biology because I love them both, so I studied them both. And then I had this epiphany... I was really a biology major, and then I had this epiphany studying crawfish mouthparts in a library at a city college and I remember just sitting there being like "I'm memorizing all these mouthparts. And it doesn't matter."

**Steven:** So, this is... Because Wendy Fick asks: What sparked your interest in science? This is the moment. This is the moment for you.

**Alie:** No! This is what made me change my major to film!

**Steven:** Oh shit!

**Alie:** I was on the course to be a biologist and I was studying these crayfish mouthparts and I was like, "I don't know if I can do this forever." And then I was like, "I think I want to make art stuff but make art stuff about science." So, that was the moment I was like, "I think maybe I can do both." But I always loved... You know what, my parents got me this microscope when I was, like, 8. They got me this toy microscope. It was really good though; it worked really well but it was for kids. It was made of plastic so you couldn't break it.

**Steven:** The Speak & Spell of microscopes.

**Alie:** Pretty much. I have a replica of it.

**Steven:** Oh shit!

**Alie:** I found one, like the same kind, at an old thrift shop and I went bananas and I bought it. But yeah, I think they were just, I don't know, maybe, just whatever last-minute Christmas gifts, and I ended up loving it. I used it all the time. I would swab dust and put moth mouths under it, and I just loved it. And so, I remember my sisters and I listened to The Beatles a lot around that time. We just would listen to tapes of The Beatles, and I would look at my microscope, and I remember just being like "This is heaven. This is the life!"

So then I studied it in college, but I just... I think I wanted to do something with art and science and I thought maybe I would be a biological illustrator or something. I ended up studying film and then I always wanted to do this, but I got kind of sidetracked doing some, like, journalism and other stuff. I kept kind of bouncing around.

**Aside:** According to Aliopedia, (her, not Wikipedia) she started as an illustrator at the *LA Weekly* in 2005 here in Los Angeles before writing for the same publication in 2006. Then she moved onward and upward to the *LA Times* in 2007 and wrote for them until 2010.

**Steven:** Well, it sort of gave you the means to come around and do this, in a way.

**Alie:** Right.

**Steven:** And also, we... just for the listeners, we both went to UCSB and did film... We both did the same program.

**Alie:** We did! Right!

**Steven:** Yeah, which is just so crazy to think about.

**Alie:** That is really, really weird. I think you were there, like, 25 years after me.

**Steven:** No, no, no...

**Alie:** When I was in college studying film, we would actually cut film with razor blades and have to tape it back together as editing.

**Steven:** I will be fair; I feel very lucky that my class was probably one of the last classes to do that because they definitely don't do it anymore.

**Alie:** Don't feel lucky. It sucks!

**Steven:** You know, there's something Zen about it a little bit.

**Alie:** Ehhh...??

**Steven:** But I think only just because people don't do that anymore. But yeah, I agree. I don't know if I'd want to... definitely, as an editor, I definitely wouldn't want to do that for a living. Can you imagine editing *Ologies* like that?

**Alie:** No, no!

**Steven:** But yeah. So, basically you did film stuff, and television stuff, and food stuff, but then that kind of allowed you to...

**Alie:** Right, right.

**Steven:** So, then a question that a lot of people had, of course, which was Bree DeVries, Danny Kang, and then Melissa Koetzle, I like the way she worded it: What was it that finally gave you the kick in the butt you needed to actually start making the podcast you wanted to make for so long? Which is *Ologies*.

**Alie:** Aww that's such a good question! I like the food arena but it always felt like it was not quite what I really wanted to do. I felt like I kind of fell into it and was like, "Okay." But then I started volunteering at a museum in 2013. I had a really... I don't know, I'm sure some people have heard the story. I had a really, really shitty, shitty year. I mentioned it in the hematology episode, I think, or no, the Museology... No, Entomology episode?

**Steven:** Wait wasn't it the Museology episode? I feel like...

**Alie:** Maybe it was, I can't remember. But I had a really shitty year, and I was really sad, and my dad got diagnosed with myeloma. He's doing really well by the way! And so, I was just... I went through a breakup where I was really bummed, and so I started volunteering at the museum and that kind of opened up the whole science correspondent stuff for me because I really just did it because I wanted to be there. I just needed something to lift my spirits because I was so... I was just crying all the time. I remember being like, "I only cried three times today. What an improvement!"

**Steven:** If you were doing your bullet journaling, then you'd have a little square, a little row for crying, like: Sleep Schedule; Eating; Exercise; Crying.

**Alie:** Like three teardrops in a special blue pen. I was so bummed. And then I met all these really great people through the museum. And then I have a friend, Andy Hall, who works with *Innovation Nation*, which is the show I work on now. He edits for them and they were looking for a correspondent and he's like, "You know, my friend Alie has always liked science, and she works at this museum sometimes," and that's how I ended up getting a job at *Innovation Nation*. They were like, "Hey, we're casting this new show and we understand that you do TV but you also like science." I was like, "Holy shit!" Who knew that volunteering would have led me there?

I think there was a weird moment where I... even with my Instagram I had food, comedy, podcast, Instagram, but I was afraid to put up pictures of science because I was like, "Oh that's kind of off-brand, and people follow me for drink recipes and vintage clothes." So, I remember putting something up, saying that I got my badge to start volunteering at the museum, and someone made some comment like, "Oh yeah, are you going to make any whiskey shots for the kids?" And I just remember being like, "That's not who I am!"

I just remember being really kind of bummed, and it was kind of an eye-opener for me that I wasn't maybe doing what I was supposed to do. But in terms of the podcast I'd wanted to do this idea for so, so long. And then the day that I actually put it up... I'd been working on it for like... *You* know, we worked on it for like nine months together!

**Steven:** Yeah, one question from Julie Noble was: What did you do to celebrate the launch of *Ologies*?

**Alie:** Oh god...

**Steven:** Which, you know, is a bigger question in a bigger story. We can get into it.

**Alie:** Making *Ologies*... You helped me for months. I really wanted to make this and I had come to you being like... I remember you were there when we recorded, obviously, paleontology.

**Steven:** Of course! Yeah, yeah.

**Alie:** Dinosaurs! We were like, "Bring him in the booth! Get him in the booth!" And I came to you and I was like, "Steven, I have these interviews, and I think they're good, but I don't think

they really capture what I want this to capture.” And you sat down with me, you showed me how to use GarageBand, you gave me all these tips. And we went back and forth with edits and stuff, and then finally I was like, “What if we put in these little asides and stuff?” So, worked forever on that and then was like, “Okay, I finally think I got this in a good place,” and then the day that it went to launch with our old podcast network, they put up the unedited version! [laughs]

**Steven:** This was... I mean, we’re recording this a year from the first episode with Jess Phoenix, but the first episode, it had an edit from, like, April or something, which wasn’t ever meant to be finished or anything.

**Alie:** No asides, no sound effects, all this stuff that we ended up taking out. So, kind of a raw version is what went up for the very first episode. The network had just put up an old file and I realized the error after several thousand downloads had already gone through. All these people had been, like, pumping it forever. So, I had to be like, “Everyone erase that one! There’s actually the real...” So that was a little... I celebrated that day by just, probably, hoarsely crying into a pillow being like, “Am I cursed??”

**Steven:** Well, it’s like shitting in your pants on your birthday. [Alie laughs] Do you know what I mean? “It’s my birthday, but still this...” You know? And again, it’s this thing of like, all this work that you put in. And that’s the thing I was going to say before, is that I feel like it’s funny that you got that comment when you were starting to volunteer, because I feel like a big part of why I was a fan of *Slumber Party* and how I found the podcast and stuff is that over the evolution of that podcast, you would just talk about science stuff more and more and more. I just thought that was very inspiring because you’re just like, “Hey here’s something I’m interested in.” So, it’s cool to think that you got a job doing science correspondence because you manifested your interests.

**Alie:** Thank you! I was really afraid it would alienate people and they’d be like, “This is not what I came here for.”

**Steven:** Well, no. That’s another thing, like UCSB, I almost double-majored in geology and film.

**Alie:** REALLY!?

**Steven:** But because I wanted to study abroad, it’s harder to study abroad in the sciences and stuff. So, I’ve always related to that desire to want to be involved with science but not necessarily being good enough at math or whatever to get the degree.

**Aside:** While getting a geology degree at UCSB required a ton of undergrad coursework in biology, physics, chemistry, and math, getting a film and media studies degree only required two science classes. I chose dinosaurs, obviously, and natural disasters. And yet they were the best grades I ever got in my four years there. Sooo...

**Steven:** I feel like I really connected with that. And so then of course when *Ologies*... when you were wanting to do it, it’s like, of course I wanted to at least... just even be like, “Hey I love what you’re doing,” or whatever. So, I was so thankful you wanted me to help out.

**Alie:** Oh, hell yeah. I was like, “I got Steven Ray Morris to work on this!” Because I’ve known you for years. I remember you came to a *Slumber Party* live show and you told me about a cockroach infestation and I was like, “I like this kid.” [laughs]

**Steven:** The great cockroach infestation of 2014 or something like that.

**Alie:** We just talked about how cockroaches are the one insect that I'm like, "I want to be down with you. But..."

**Steven:** Well, I eventually held them when I did that live animal thing. And I let cockroaches... they did, like, Bob Ross painting but with cockroaches. I was picking them up and I felt very... I was like, "Alie would be proud of me right now. I'm holding all these bugs." And then they did a thing where they were... it was like a Twitch to raise money for charity and if you donated \$50 they'll put a tarantula on your head.

**Alie:** Oh, that's awesome!

**Steven:** A Brazilian rose...

**Alie:** A rose hair tarantula?

**Steven:** This is where the aside comes in. It was so funny because I think I played it so cool that nobody put it on me all day. But with the person, of course, who was like, [*mock quiet screams*] "Nooo!!" Of course, it's funnier. And then by the end of the day, I was like, "Oh I didn't get to hold the tarantula," and then I just held it, like not even on camera, and I was like, "Oh, wow, I feel like..." Just from learning from the podcast and trying to overcome that fear of insects. Well, technically a spider is...

**Alie:** An arachnid. Close enough. But did you feel like you got over like a bug hump with that?

**Steven:** A little bit, for sure.

**Alie:** That's good.

**Steven:** Yeah. Yeah, so I was just like, "I feel like Alie will be proud of me that I'm holding cockroaches and tarantulas right now."

**Alie:** I think it's funny too, because when we see a cockroach or a tarantula come out of a terrarium we're like, "Okay, you're okay. We got it. We got your back story. Probably the worst thing that's going on is maybe you got some mites in your joints." But when there's just something, like, eating an apple core...

**Steven:** Or under your socks in your underwear drawer or whatever, you're like...

**Alie:** Or out of a sewer drain. [*laughs*] I had a friend who sent me a bug picture, like, "Alie, what is this bug?" And I love those. I get them... sometimes a couple a day and I'm like, "Bring it on."

**Aside:** I have to admit, the moment Alie and I exchanged numbers I took advantage of her bug encyclopedia brain and texted her often like, "Whoa, what kind of spider is this?" and "Hey this moth looks at rather unique, doesn't it?"

**Alie:** He's like, "What is this cute little bug?" And I was like, "It's a baby cockroach. I hate to tell you."

**Steven:** So, in all of this, like, getting ready, being excited, and then this day happens, it just... But it seems like, pretty quickly people understood what this podcast is about and glommed on. It was just, I think, your instinct of having the asides was like such a good choice because people love it.

**Alie:** I think it's Matt Myers that says this, that there's East Coast podcasts and West Coast podcasts, and East Coast podcasts are very, like NPR and *This American Life*, and sound beds, and fading in, and narration, and dadada; and then West Coast's are a couple of mics in a room...



**Steven:** In a closet, as we are right now.

**Alie:** Yeah, “Let’s shoot the shit and put this thing up! It goes up an hour? Great, perfect.” So, I started recording these and I remember being like, “It’s gonna be a West Coast podcast. I’m just gonna kick it with scientists,” and then being like, “ugh... there’s a lot of things I didn’t understand, or I didn’t want to ask, or maybe needed some levity, but I don’t have the means.” I’m not NPR, I can’t do a full, produced thing. So, the asides seemed like a good in-between, where it was mostly a long form interview but just with these pop-ins being like “real quick...”

I remember putting it up and being like, “This isn’t East Coast *or* West Coast! What if there’s a reason why this format doesn’t exist?? It probably sucks!” And then it’s nice that it ended up working as a format.

**Steven:** I’ve noticed people want to learn when they listen to podcasts, but they also want to be entertained, and you are taking the parts of the scientists that are sharing this exciting information and humanizing them. But also, just giving it a kind of a rudder so that you could actually go to this episode and really come away with real knowledge, not just about who the scientist is but about what they do, which I think is why the podcast is so important, why science advocacy is so important, because the point is that you’re supposed to not only care about it but also learn something. So, I feel like that’s why the asides became so essential.

**Alie:** Oh, that’s good. Sometimes I’m like, “Do people hate these?” But I think they like ‘em. I don’t know. I hope so.

**Steven:** Well, there’s a great question, as I’m sorting through. Oh, here we go. This is kind of a long one, but it kind of ties into this, which is that Kelly Janes asks: I’m very inspired by your ability to provide excellent science communication.

**Alie:** Awww!

**Steven:** You make complex and difficult ideas easy to understand without seeming pedantic and you make it all seem so fascinating. I’m an environmental planner for a government agency that does a lot of high-tech research design and construction of watershed infrastructures.

**Alie:** Dang!

**Steven:** And my job is often to help educate the public on our work so they can provide comments on how our projects will impact their lives. I was always told to try and say it in a way that my grandma would understand, which has never been helpful. Any tips for how to communicate technical stuff effectively to the general public?

**Alie:** Oooh. I mean, I guess I don’t go by the grandma rule unless your grandma swears a lot. And my parents listen to this and I’m like, “Oh sorry, Mom. Sorry Dad.” A couple people have been like, “Can you not swear as much?” Just a couple, and then most people are like, “Keep swearing. It’s fine.” But gearing communication toward a grandma depends on how informal you want to get.

I think the biggest thing about it is, why people should care. I think the information is only important if people care about it. And so, I think the first thing you have to do is relate it to people’s lives. People watch beauty tutorials because they want to do the same thing and feel more beautiful. People watch whittling tutorials usually because they want to learn how to whittle, unless they have ASMR, in which case, Steven, they just watch them.

**Steven:** That's me. That's me! I'm watching all these kinds of things.

**Aside:** I call it the Bob Ross effect. The soothing tingles you get when someone has a smooth, calming voice. And according to Wikipedia; Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response, ASMR, is an experience characterized by a static-like or tingling sensation on the skin that typically begins on the scalp and moves down to the back of the neck and the upper spine. ASMR signifies the subjective experience of:

*Low-grade euphoria characterized by a combination of positive feelings and distinct static-like tingling sensations on the skin. It is most commonly triggered by specific auditory or visual stimuli and less commonly by intentional attention control.*

Whatever that means. Tom Stafford, a lecturer in Psychology and Cognitive Sciences at the University of Sheffield, was reported to have said that "ASMR might as well be a real thing. But it is inherently difficult to research something like this. You can't see it, or feel it, and it doesn't happen to everyone." Stafford compares the current status of ASMR with development attitudes towards synesthesia, which he says, "For years was a myth then in the 1990s people came up with a reliable way of measuring it." Meh,

*[lowers voice and speaks closely into the mic]* I guess this is a test to see if it works on you. Hmm? *[clip of Bob Ross: "Ready to have some fun?"]*

**Alie:** Wood carving videos with no intention of ever wood carving in your life.

**Steven:** Hell yeah. Hell yeah. I'm all about that.

**Alie:** But usually we watch these because we want to take a nugget of that to make our lives better. We want to put something in our pockets. And the first thing with science communication is you have to explain why it's a little bit relevant to their lives. And that means *you* have to figure out why it's relevant. You can't convince other people something is relevant if you don't believe it.

So, you have to get excited about that and then I think it's a matter of... just artful analogies are helpful. I mean if they're applicable, like if you're working on, what is it, water systems? Trying to figure out on a smaller scale what it's similar to in other people's lives. You know what I mean? Whether or not that's comparing Hatshepsut to Miranda, or butterflies and Tinder, or something. Make it emotional for people. I learned that from being at the museum, actually. I don't think I would have known that.

When you're at the museum as a docent, which I was one step below a docent, but you actually go up these levels, but they... museums teach this thing called... The way that they interpret is that you don't ever tell someone, like, "Look at this artifact. This is the artifact, blah blah blah blah." The first thing you do is figure out what is the emotional importance of an artifact. You could be looking at a desk and like, "Okay. Cool, old desk." This was the first desk Walt Disney drew his very first cartoon on. Suddenly that desk becomes important. Someone else's wedding ring doesn't mean the same thing that yours might to you, so it's all about the emotionality of the object or the fact, and then getting people to care about it that way.

I think science is the same thing. It's like, why should we care about ladybug migration? Well, this is what it's like that's similar to your life, or this is what it would be like if we didn't have it. I think everyone feels more of a connection to things when they can put it in the context of their own life.

**Steven:** I also think a big part of your guest is because they're so passionate about it. I think that's very infectious and I think your interest in it as well is what makes it infectious. It's like we care because... This must mean something if this person that we think is cool... It's the idea that they love their job and that's cool when people like their jobs. So then you're like, "Oh wait, now I'm listening, I'm paying attention." They're not just coasting through this thing. They're not just, like, at the DMV or something. Who knows, someone at the DMV could love their job.

**Alie:** They might!

**Steven:** And that would be awesome.

**Alie:** That would be awesome and I would love to hear about that. But I mean, yeah, that's the thing with scientists. You don't realize how much scientists give up to do their job. It's expensive to get your PhD; you get student loans, you're not making a lot as a grad student, you're on treks a lot, you're in the lab late hours. Whatever. There's a lot of sacrifices that scientists make.

I think people think, "Oh, you have a PhD. You must make so much money," and a lot of them are like, "Ehh it really depends on what you do with it." So, there's a lot of sacrifices people make to become scientists or to become experts in things. Even if they never... you know, I've interviewed ologists who didn't even go to college, and that's fine too. They just love what they do, and they got really good at it, and they're *that* ologist, and that's just as valid. It's just having a passion so much that you become really proficient in it, enough to help other people and share it. That's the whole spirit behind it, no matter what level of school you're at.

**Steven:** Well, I also think, for me personally, why I admire scientists is because sometimes the work they're doing isn't really to change anything in their own lifetime. They're looking at the bigger picture where, like, "My little part is going to make the future a better place," and I always find that sacrifice incredible to think about.

**Alie:** Oh totally! When they're like, "I know everything about this one wasp and this piece of the puzzle is gonna come in handy later," and you're like, "Okay, that's great." I do think that's really interesting, finding out what it was that sparked someone's interest enough to follow that path that long. This person's dream might be to be a wasp scientist and they're like, "I love parasite wasps! I'm so into it," and then you realize that whatever your dream is, if you're into it, then you're on the right road. You know what I mean?

I think when you have a dream or when you have an ambition, you think everyone wants to do your ambition so that path is going to be packed and you're not going to make it because it's just going to be wall-to-wall, like New York City rush hour down the street. But then you're like, "Oh maybe not, because everyone has their own thing that they want to do," you know?

**Steven:** Yeah, as evidenced in your career path. Nobody else took that same journey that you've taken so far.

**Alie:** Right. And I'm sitting here being like, "There's no way I could be a science communicator. Everyone wants to do that right?" Some people are like, "No, get that camera outta my face! I'm a baker, dude." So, I guess it's like... the thing that the ologists always inspired me with is just figuring out what you like the most. That's most of the battle when it comes to careers. A lot of times too, you don't know what you really want to do unless you write it down. There's stuff that I wanted to do that I'm too scared to even admit to myself because

it seems too lofty a goal, and then I'll write it down in really bad handwriting on a tiny piece of paper just to be like, [*tiny voice*] "This is it."

**Steven:** Those are the secrets at the end of future *Ologies* episodes.

**Alie:** Yes! And then once you admit to yourself that that's what you want to do, it's like you have so much better of a chance of actually getting it done. The first step is just admitting your ambition.

**Steven:** Yeah. It's a very exciting thing. That just reminded me that there's a post in the *Ologies* Facebook group of people sharing their secrets, which I thought was really cool.

**Alie:** Oh! I want to get into that one.

**Steven:** Yeah, you're just like, "All right, let me just read this with a kombucha and just soak up everybody's secrets." Speaking of ologists and that process, there's a few process questions I thought would be interesting. Aki says: How much time does it take you to do pre-interview and post-interview research? And then Julie Noble asked: How much research do you usually do before you meet each guest? The podcast always seems like a casual conversation, but certainly you aren't a walking Encyclopedia of science information... or are you? (Thinking Emoji.)

**Alie:** Oh, I'm actually an android. I'm just an android covered in just soft, dry flesh. I had a dream last night that I went to go interview someone and as I sat down to interview them, they were like, "Did you even Google me?" And I was like, "Oh shit. I didn't."

**Steven:** Oh no! That's my worst nightmare.

**Alie:** I know! I was like, "Oh no, I didn't even Google her!" And then in the dream, I was like... I don't like to do too much research because I like to be surprised. So, in the dream, I even tried to goose around it.

**Steven:** Yeah. Goose around.

**Alie:** I don't know. Is that a term?

**Steven:** Yeah? [*both quack/honk at each other*]

**Alie:** But I just... I find that the interviews where I've done less research before is usually better sometimes because then I can... I'm not trying to prove anything. Like, I'll typically research what their work is like, where they've worked, where they went to school, maybe where they lived, but I try not to get too into their back story because it's really nice to hear it for the first time. When someone's like, "I started out as a ballet dancer and now I'm this," and your like, "I know." It's like, "Okay..."

**Steven:** Well also... I don't know if this has changed at all, but knowing that you have these asides, knowing that you can fill in the gaps later, has that affected the way that you conducted interviews?

**Alie:** Oh yeah, because sometimes there'll be something that I won't know in the moment and I'll be like, "That'll be a good aside." I think I didn't start off thinking about asides but sometimes in the interview I'll be like, "I can go off on that tangent," but I'll quickly come back to the interview and try and just be super present. But I think the research after is where it really comes in. I do the interview and then I send it through a program called Temi.

**Steven:** Hell yeah. Game changer.

**Alie:** It's so fucking great. It's like ten cents a minute, which is cheap, so like an hour is six dollars; you get a full transcript. And it's like Siri transcribed your term paper after a margarita. It's not perfect but you're like, "Okay."

**Steven:** It gives you a starting point. I can imagine, you've just done an hour-and-a-half interview and the idea of having to parse through that, that's probably the most overwhelming point. But then having that transcript just gives you a little bit of a...

**Alie:** I can't imagine. I think that's part of the reason why it took so long in trying to figure out a format. Before I had a transcript of it, I would be like... it'd be like searching around a pitch-black closet for a certain shirt and you're like, "I don't know who said what when." It's just trying to edit that and be like, "Where is the... ugh."

**Steven:** Also I think listeners know that you record it yourself because you're meeting all these people while you're on the road, you know, traveling and stuff like that. So, you aren't necessarily able to be like, "At 2:45, you said this," because again you're trying to be present in this interview and you're already doing so much. So, having that transcript, I imagine, just gave you a little bit of a road guide.

**Alie:** Road... Sure! *Thomas Guide*.

**Steven:** Yeah, *Thomas Guide*.

**Alie:** A full, thick, 35-page *Thomas Guide* for every... The transcripts are like 25-30 pages. It's almost like when you're writing a news article, all of your words are there and then you have the quotes from your interviewee, and with *Ologies* I kind of flipped it where I have mostly dialogue with the interviewee and my asides are kinda like the quotes in an article. So, I kind of just flipped the format and then once I did that I could structure it, and I could arc the story, and it was so much easier to say, "This whole chunk is maybe not relevant. We can nix it."

**Steven:** And that's what makes it really great. We're constructing a story and what's nice is that you can go to the interview without an agenda and then later you can be like... just thinking about Egyptology where, you know, you could have had just a very nuts and bolts 101 Egyptology, but instead you kind of brought in... especially with Dr. Kara Cooney's work and stuff, you kind of brought in a more beautiful, bigger, more important, bigger picture, and you wouldn't necessarily know that going in.

I mean, she had that book but I think with the way the interview shaped out, you were able to just kind of... again, you're carving wood. You're whittling away until you're finding the really strong through-line that's going to hopefully impact people and stuff like that.

**Alie:** And that's great. That's always great when ologists just have a perspective and a point of view that they're passionate about. A lot of times what informs their work is their passion about a particular question or a particular way that their work relates to society in general. So, it's really cool to touch on that and be like, "Oh here it is. Okay. This is their through-line." We record for maybe an hour and 15, and then I cut out enough of that where it's a little tighter, and then I add maybe 15-20 minutes of asides in too, depending. I write like 4,000 words a week, and I realized that I've written the equivalent of a full novel, like 160,000 words in the last year to write and research. It's like, "Oh, no wonder I'm so tired! [laughs] No wonder why I fell asleep in my clothes again!"

**Steven:** We've all fallen asleep on our computer.

**Alie:** Oh, I've fallen asleep with my actual face on the keyboard.

**Aside:** Alie and I both don't get enough sleep. But at least we give each other a hard time about it.

**Alie:** I feel like with *Ologies*, one of my goals with it was to take people who are doing awesome things and put them on a pedestal and be like, "Look at this awesome person that you maybe wouldn't have heard of before because you don't run in the same online circles or something. Look how awesome they are! Fall in love with them." I want to be like a yenta to scientists and the general public. Like, "I have someone you're gonna love!" I want to matchmake. And so, whenever I see people who listen to the podcast get really jazzed about someone, which they do almost every episode, it makes me feel like when you introduce someone and then you see them flirting from far away and you're like, "I love this!"

**Steven:** Like two friends can hang out without the friend who introduced them.

**Alie:** Yes, and it's cool. And it's cute.

**Steven:** Because, twofold, I think each podcast episode can not only be a primer for people who've never heard of it, but then also, because ologites are so curious and so, you know, chip off Old DadWard's block, I think that even if the episode isn't necessarily 100% that kind of rote nuts and bolts thing, having that perspective from these scientists, having these interesting personalities on, then it also makes them learn something new. It's kind of like a cool feedback loop of people who have never heard of it and now are going off exploring, and the people who had heard of it are hearing something new about it. And then it's just, hopefully, like we're going to be behind the tree like, "Yeah! They're following each other now," you know.

**Alie:** And I always love whenever anyone's like, "I didn't think I'd be into this subject and then I ended up loving it."

**Steven:** That's the best part.

**Alie:** It's my favorite thing because it's like... I want to try to point out that everything is fascinating in context. With passion and context, anything is interesting. You know what I mean?

**Steven:** Oh, of course. That's why I am watching these VHS collection videos and those cologne scent videos and stuff.

**Alie:** Is it more of an ASMR thing or is it more of, like, a look into these people's lives?

**Steven:** It's a bit of both, because you're trying to see behind the curtain, like what's going on, even though you only have this little narrow window YouTube screen. You're like, "What is their actual life after they've, you know, put all the colognes away and then they have to go to work?" I think I sent you... there's one guy who works in an auto body shop, but then he'll bring out the juice and talk about all the different scents like, "It's got kind of a patchouli base with an afternote of lavender," but he's in an auto body shop. Your like, "This must be the most interesting..."

Or it's a person who, you know... Again, I think that's a big part of why there is this group of people who love science but aren't necessarily scientists, because it's this part that fascinates them but maybe they don't feel like they can integrate it in their lives somehow. So maybe listening to something like this is can let them be like, "I love bugs too!" or, "I want to..." Personally, I'm obsessed with natural history museums, and it's my thing of, like, every city I visit I'm trying to go to that city's natural history museum while I'm there.

**Alie:** That's so... considering jet lag and your schedule, that's so admirable because I don't even do that and now I'm like, "I should be doing that."

**Steven:** Well, to be fair, I only go to... I go to the dinosaurs, I go to the gems, thanks to Kelly Sitek, who you had on.

**Alie:** Gemologist extraordinaire.

**Steven:** Yeah, way back in the day.

**Alie:** I know! And the food court.

**Steven:** What? Oh, the food court! Yes of course. I get a beer. I get a traveling beer. I was going to say, because I've had Kelly on *The Purrrrcast*, and whenever I go to a natural history museum where there's gems, I'm always taking pictures for her because I'm always like... I don't necessarily know how cool this is but I'm sure if I text her and show this photo she's going to be like, "Oh, this is amazing." Sometimes she'll just be like, "Juicy," at this beautiful gemstone. I forget which natural history museum it was, but there was a marine reptile that got opalized. So, its fossils are like opal.

**Alie:** Stop it! That's like so fancy.

**Steven:** It's like, "Oh, yeah? Your fossil? My fossil's just regular bone. Yours turned into like jewels!"

**Alie:** That's so extra.

**Steven:** And I think, again, with the group, the Facebook group, just seeing everyone get excited and share with each other, like, "Oh I was out here today..." even if we can't be a scientist we can still learn and explore.

**Alie:** The thing is... This is what boggles me and this is like my whole mission with science. Science is everywhere! It's in everything. It's in your whiskey. It's in your ice cream. It's in your car. It's in the clothes you wear. It's in the shower you take. Science is everywhere. All science is, is just how stuff works, and it's in everything. The idea to be like, "I'm not really into science," well, do you like eating or breathing? You're into science; science is part of your life.

Having more context for how that stuff works, I think, gives everything so much more meaning, kind of like that desk. "What is this desk versus what happened at this desk?" And I feel like even just seeing a katydid bug land on your car, knowing a little bit about that bug makes that whole encounter different, you know? Or seeing a moth circle on a porch light and saying like, "Oh those were OG and they came before butterflies." That's a little bit more back story and context. And like... do you ever watch *The Bachelor*? You can say no.

**Steven:** I mean, I have in the past. I definitely am not keeping up, unfortunately.

**Alie:** I'm not keeping up either, but I mean, I've been known to drink white wine and watch *The Bachelor*.

**Steven:** Self-care.

**Alie:** It's self-care, but it's like, it's horrendous, and it's a display of literally everything wrong with the world.

**Steven:** I was gonna say, *is* it self-care? Listen to the beauty episode.

**Alie:** It's really... in a white wine mockery way, it has its benefits, but I would watch it with my friend Kat Burns...

**Aside:** Kathryn M Burns is a goddamn American hero and Emmy-winning choreographer on the show *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* and pretty much any funny show in the last 10 years that has a scene involving dancing. Remember the aerobics meltdown sketch from Key & Peele? Yeah, she choreographed that. She's amazing. Also, we share the same birthday.

**Alie:** We haven't watched it in years, and if you haven't been following the season and then he has to propose to two people and you're like, "I don't give a shit. Who are these people? Why are they in ball gowns? I don't care who he asks." But if you've been watching the whole season, you're like, "Oh my god! He said he loved her!!" The more context you have for anything in your life, the more enriching of an experience it is. So I think that understanding that science is everywhere, and getting tapped into that, and knowing that, as a human person, you have a right to own science too. It's not just for people in lab coats. It's not just for people with certain degrees, it all affects your life.

One thing about this podcast that I was really afraid of... I was like, "Scientists are going to hate this podcast. They're going to think it's dumb. They're going to think that I'm making stuff too easy. They're going to write me every week and be like 'You said this molecule wrong.'" I was like, "Oh my god, scientists are going to be so mean to me, I'm nervous." I have this friend Casey Handmer, and he's married to this another amazing scientist, Christine Corbett, and they both work at JPL. They just had a baby. They're the smartest people I've ever met, and I remember thinking, "They're going to hate this podcast because it's going to be, like, too below them," and they're my biggest supporters! They're such cheerleaders.

It always boggles me that scientists listen to this podcast because I was afraid I was not gonna do it well enough. It turns out that scientists are super curious about other people's fields and I guess scientists were ready to learn about something in a more lighthearted way, with more talk about buttocks and stuff.

**Steven:** [laughs] Keep it casual but also learning. I almost feel like scientists are probably more understanding because it's so hard.

**Alie:** They are, and I rarely get corrections, and if I do they're warm and gentle like, "Oh, hey, you know what, actually, crocodiles might not be Geminis in this hemisphere. They might mostly be Virgos." And I asked on Twitter, and I'd done a bunch of research, and like they're in different hemispheres, so someone from a crocodile conservation society was like, "Hey just..." and I was like, "That's dope!"

**Steven:** There was one question that I thought was very interesting from Jacqueline Jacot: Do you feel like an outsider in the sci-comm community? If so, how did you overcome that?

**Alie:** Oh, that's such a nice question. I had a problem when I was doing, like, UCB storytelling and monologues at ASSSSCAT, and comedy stuff, and then also working for a cooking channel. I felt like the comedy person in the cooking world and the cooking person in comedy world, and then I kind of felt the same with science, where I felt like the comedy person in the science world. And then I would be hanging out with comedians and everybody would be like, "Alie, what the fuck is this spider?"

And so, I think for a while it frustrated me that I didn't have both my feet in one world, and then I realized... I was talking to my friend Cara Santa Maria, who has this great podcast



called *Talk Nerdy*, and she was like, “That’s your strength. You need to accept that, that you’re more of the voice of the listener.” We joked I’m like the Huell Howser in the science world.

**Aside:** Huell Howser, R.I.P., was an American television personality, actor, producer, writer, singer, and voice artist best known for hosting, producing, and writing *California’s Gold* his human-interest show produced by KCET in Los Angeles for PBS. Alie describes him best:

**Alie:** He would ask these questions on camera that were like... He’d go up to a water fountain and be like, “Well what’s this?” They’d be like, “It’s a water fountain.” “How does it work?” But he was just unabashedly curious. And so, I kind of feel like in the science world I can be... I’m allowed to really ask questions for the listener, maybe, that other people would be afraid of, like, losing cred.

**Steven:** Well, I think at this point... I think scientists are realizing that they need to win over regular people. This world is so scary and it’s hard to get funding for anything. So, I think... You want people to care.

**Alie:** And different science communicators all have their own different voice. Like I feel really lucky that I’m friends with a whole group of scientists and science communicators. We call ourselves the Nerd Brigade. It started from a very stupid... We all started hanging out because it was Valentine’s Day and some of us didn’t have dates, and I sent out an email like, “Hey, anyone want to get a brigade of nerds together and just go get some drinks and talk about the worst mating rituals in nature?” And a couple people were like, “Hell yeah, I’m in!”

So four of us, Kyle Hill, who’s now the science editor at Nerdist, my friend Holly Bender, who listens, (hi Holly!). She’s works at JPL. And then Phil Torres who has a TV show that starts same day as mine on October 6th. He’s a lepidopterologist. We all just got together and told these stupid stories, but it then became this thing, a brigade of nerds, you know, and because they’re all professional and have their shit together they ended up doing a website and a Twitter handle.

But all of them, like Cara Santa Maria, Phil, Kyle, Crystal, they’re all amazing and everyone has a different voice in what they do. One might be really good at science and tech communication, like Cara’s this amazing neuroscientist who can go into a live brain surgery and know what the fuck she’s talking about it. So, I think if anyone’s considering science communication, just figure out what your passion, what your voice is, and what you offer, and lean toward that.

**Steven:** Sophia Garbos asks: Have there been any ologies that you wanted to do an episode on but thought maybe we the audience wouldn’t be interested? She said: Any that you are avoiding? And I thought April Fahr’s question was a good follow-up. She said: Did you ever meet somebody you would love to interview and you really try hard to make a case for them being an ologist, but you just can’t quite get there? I thought those two questions were... there’s kind of a middle ground.

**Alie:** There’s some that I know people will be interested in but I’m afraid of it being too woo-woo. There’s an herbologist I know who’s really awesome. She’s so funny, and she listens, and she also does acupuncture, and I want to do a deep dive on that, on like Eastern medicine and acupuncture, and I am afraid of trying to toe the line between, “Okay, what do the scientific studies say versus what’s anecdotal?” I don’t want to bring on an ologist

who... I don't want to expose them to, like, a bunch of people naysaying, necessarily. And I won't know until I do the episode, really, what the outcome is. So, there are ones that I'm like, "That could be an amazing episode, and I could learn a ton about Eastern medicine, and I could find a bunch of stories and actual double-blind studies that totally support it, and that could be revolutionary for me personally to learn."

I don't ever, ever, ever want to make any ologist feel bad on the show, and so I never want to call into question their field. So, I think that's one that I want to try and fit... Anyone listening, if they have thoughts on this, let me know. I'm trying to think of people who I'm like, "Can we make this an ology?" I think botany is one of those where I have to find the individual subsets of botany to make it, you know... Like dendrology is kind of botany, but it's trees. And that's another one where I'm like, "Casey Clapp! Come on! You're a dendrologist!" He's like, "Well, I don't specifically..." I'm like, "Come on!"

**Steven:** Funny that we're talking about this because Haile Hullings says: What ology do you wish existed but it doesn't?

**Alie:** Oh my god. Oh, an ology that I wish existed that doesn't. Oh my god, what would be my favorite thing? No, I'm sure there's vulpinology. I would love to interview someone about foxes one day.

**Aside:** In attempting to search for any vulpinologists I stumbled across a public library website straight outta late-'90s GeoCities, advertising a vulpinology program that:

*... teaches people what it takes to be a fox. Learn about life in a fox family, which starts with courtship, choosing a den, and raising their young. The kids in the audience will be the young foxes in the simulation and we'll learn what foxes eat, the purpose of play, how to hunt, and how to claim their own territory as they grow older. Folks will learn a little bit about the language of foxes and their incredible ability to adapt to almost any environment.*

Should I sign Alie up to this class as a present for her birthday this year?

**Alie:** I would love to do one on addiction. I don't know what... I know that's not a very fun one. I should be like, "Cotton Candyologist," or something. [*clip from YouTube video: "Candy Mountain, you fill me with sweet sugary goodness!"*] Or, "Corndogologist!" Yes to those one day.

**Steven:** Oh, that is me one day.

**Alie:** You're definitely a corndogologist.

**Steven:** Working on it. Working on my master's right now. Maybe one day I'll get my PhD.

**Alie:** You've sent me multiple pictures of corn dogs this week, and I'm here for it.

**Steven:** Well, that's how I am. But also because I work on *Totally Laime*, which you were also on recently and you guys have that whole conversation about hot dogs.

**Aside:** Television writer Elizabeth Laime and her husband music producer Andy Rosen host a legendary podcast called *Totally Laime* that was one of the pillars of the LA comedy podcast scene when I first moved here. When they revamped the show in 2018, I was brought on to edit the show and it's been one of the consistent joys of my week ever since. Obviously, I was stoked when Alie was a guest recently. And if you're curious, it features Elizabeth's amazing interviewing skills, as Alie puts it:

**Alie:** Yeah, Elizabeth Laime has this great way of making you just... you walk into her house, and she gives you a cookie, and it's like a weird truth serum and suddenly you're just unspooling your darkest, deepest secrets and you're like, "I love this!"

**Aside:** Look, if you're a fan of Alie and *Ologies*, her *Totally Laime* episode is essential listening and another peek behind the curtain, just like this episode. And you should be listening to *Totally Laime* anyway because you'll laugh about just how weird being a person is in this world. I totally recommend it.

**Steven:** Alicia Rae Bell says: What's the most mind-blowing fact you've learned doing the podcast so far?

**Alie:** I'm never not going to be fully shook to my core about dino digs costing less than a used Camry. Like, to my grave. I feel like I think about that several times a week where I'll be like, "10 Gs, you can dig up a dinosaur." You can fund a whole dinosaur excavation for less than my car is worth. What?!

**Steven:** Yeah. That's one of those facts from episodes that I'll tell people all the time.

**Alie:** That's such a weird one. And also, that butterflies are disgusting. There's one in each episode, but butterflies being just filthy is great.

**Steven:** The PR for the Seven Wonders of the World. Apparently butterflies had a great PR agent for all these years. Moths have been like, "What the hell??"

**Alie:** I know! Moths get shafted. Whales are like [*singsong*] "Beepbeepbeepbee, everybody loves me."

**Steven:** Dolphins, they've had really good PR people.

**Alie:** Yeah, and they're horrible! They're like... they're totally perpetrators of sexual assault. Meanwhile, sharks are like, "I'm just out here, trying to get a little nibble. A little nibble with my razor teeth."

**Steven:** Somebody had a question about, do you approach guests... like, because some people it's cold turkey and some people you have a relationship with. And I feel like I'm somebody who's like... I always want to meet the person first and say hi. I'm very, probably, overly cautious. But you've reached out to people cold turkey, you've known people for years, the whole thing.

**Alie:** Oh, yeah, I do both. Like Lila Higgins, entomologist, I've known her for years. Phil Torres, lepidopterologist, going to his wedding this weekend.

**Steven:** Oh my gosh!

**Alie:** He got the bug shoes! His fiancée Silja got him the Gucci bug shoes. I saw his Instagram story about it and I almost cried. So, some of them I've known for years and then most of them, though, they do not know me at all and I just show up in their inbox, like, all caps enthusiasm. I'm like, "You wanna meet me in a hotel room so I can ask about your personal life?" It's very weird.

I was nervous about doing this one just because I have this deep fear that no one actually gives a shit about me. [*laughs*] Like, I have a fear that this would be just TMI and everyone would be like, "Okay." So, I don't know, but I think when it comes to social media and promoting my own stuff, I struggle with that a little bit because it feels narcissistic or something. When I'm promoting stuff for *Ologies*, I feel like I'm promoting the ologist.

**Steven:** When I first started listening to *Slumber Party* and was just so inspired because it was talking about the things you're passionate about, it just made me realize, like, "Why don't I just..." That's almost a form of manifestation of, instead of trying to promote myself in a way that feels false or something. It's like, I just want to talk about, you know, cats, and dinosaurs, and science, and true crime, and pop music. If this is gonna feel like such a chore to do something like this, why don't I just fill it up with the things that I really care about?

**Alie:** Yeah, instead of molding yourself to what you think people want, just mold your life to what you want it to be and the right people will stick around. And I feel like that's true with personal lives. I feel like it's true with business stuff. The best thing that you can be about your work and your life is passionate.

**Aside:** My very talented friend and former roommate Evan Koehne, @ArtofEvanK on Instagram, and I used to have a joke in college that every alumni in the industry who came back and lectured in our classes would say that the key to success was "Be passionate and work hard." At the time, as a barely-twenty-something, we didn't quite understand what that meant. But now, over 10 years later, I get it. It's about the push to be your authentic self no matter what.

**Alie:** If I'm trying to convince people that I have a life that's very glamorous and that I'm very cool, and smart, and hang out with cool people...

**Steven:** Hanging out in a closet is glamorous. [*Alie laughs*] We're hanging in your closet right now. This is very glamorous.

**Alie:** It is funny because we're recording into an entire wardrobe of vintage dresses and stuff, which *is* very glamorous. But the fact that there's also laundry right next to it is not glamorous. But I would rather be doing that than doing a project that didn't feel like me.

**Steven:** So of course, people wanted to ask this question, two questions, technically. Christa Avampato, Claire Biddiscombe... I feel like you know who all these people are now.

**Alie:** I know a lot of your names.

**Steven:** They are your dedicated patrons. And Aki, they all ask, of course: What's the best thing about doing this podcast? And what's the worst thing about doing this project? Classic *Ologies* questions. [*Steven makes airhorn noises*]

**Alie:** Hitting me with my own questions! [*actual airhorn noise*] Oh dear. Okay, the worst thing, let's start with the worst thing ever about the podcast. I don't like doing social media because it ends up taking so much time, and I'm like, "I could have done so much editing in the time that it took me to post this."

**Steven:** It really does. It's a thing where people say, "Hey, why don't you use a scheduler and stuff?" But they just don't... the third-party app things, they don't work.

**Alie:** I don't use them either. That's the main thing I would want an intern for, which I still haven't hired an intern. If anyone wrote me a letter being like, "I'd intern for you," and then you're like, "I guess I didn't get picked," it's because no one did because I've been too busy to vet people. And also, I want to make sure that anyone who interns for me actually gets life experience that is valuable to them and not just doing it to help out.

**Steven:** Of course. Yeah, I'm 100% the same way. I never want to turn around and make someone do the things that I've sometimes had to do for people trying to make it in this industry. I don't want to put anybody through else through. I want to break the chain of that.

**Alie:** Only if it will possibly help them and they can use it as a credit to get them toward their goal, instead of just being nice. But I think, yeah, social media for some reason is always a little bit of a time suck.

**Steven:** What is the best part about doing this podcast?

**Alie:** Oh my god. Oh my gosh, the best part about doing this podcast is feeling like I have a voice that's authentic. Like, I think I loved doing the food TV stuff to a certain extent, but I feel like even the science TV stuff I do, I still have to be like, "Saturday Morning Broadcast Alie," you know? I get to be a version of myself, but it's a more polished version. It's a "more energy, more energy," kind of a thing. But with *Ologies*, whether you like it or hate it, it's very much me.

So, the weirdest thing about it is knowing that my parents listen to it. (Hi Mom!) They have never listened to any podcast I've done in the past, and there's a weird kind of bittersweet thing, where it's like even the people who are so close to you, having them know the true you, that I do swear like a sailor and I'm kind of gross, and have kind of a darker sense of humor. I think those are even things that I've hidden from some people in my real life, not even just like the public at large. And so, I think that this has been a really big exercise in bravery. I think that's why it was so scary putting it up because it's like, "What if you put this up and *everyone* hates it?" You know what I mean? "Oh no!!"

**Steven:** There's a vulnerability there. Yeah.

**Alie:** It's always better if you're real, everything's always better if you're real.

**Steven:** So, this question was from Kellie Windsor, Micah Eckard, Greg, Nich, Laura Estrada, and Jamie Cattanach... Again, I apologize, everyone. This is a lot harder than I thought, being on this end of it. I was like, "I can pronounce everyone's names fine!" [*Alie laughs*]

**Alie:** Not so easy. Just ask Radha Vakharia, whose name I said 'Radka' because my mouth jumped to her last name and put a k in her first name and so... Radha, sorry. Radha knows that if I mispronounce their name again that they get a puppy.

**Steven:** Oh, I like that. It keeps you... It's money in the swear jar.

**Alie:** Yeah, pretty much.

**Steven:** So, they all ask some variation of: What is the end goal for the podcast? I'd love for it to go on forever, but when will you feel you did your dream justice? That is... I never thought about that kind of question before. It's like, "I just want to achieve my dreams. What do you mean finishing the dream??" What does that even mean?

**Alie:** Yeah, doing it justice. At this point, if someone was like, "Turns out, podcasts are over. You can't do it anymore." I think I'd be like, "Okay, I gave it a good crack." This was a concept I'd wanted to do for so long that the fact that I now can lay claim to the concept is, like, the biggest thing. Right before I put it up... You know, we'd been working on it for like nine months. I had started an Instagram account. I think I'd started a Twitter. I had the art all done. I had recorded a bunch. I was almost done with Jess Phoenix's episode.

And someone on another podcast, who's this really big YouTuber and stuff who I know through... I've never met him before, but we have mutual friends. He said that he wanted to

do a podcast about ologies. I was like, "Are you fucking kidding me?? I have the art..." It was supposed to go up in the next week or two. I emailed him and I was like, "Hey dude, I heard that you wanted to do this. I don't know if you know, but I've been... I have an Instagram account. I've been talking about this for months and months. Maybe it's great minds, who knows. But I'm just about to release this, so are you really going to do this?" And he was like, "I probably won't." And I was like, "Okay!" So I put it up that night. I put up episode zero that night because I was like, "I just have to get this out there. Enough dicking around."

And so being able to say that this is an idea that I got to do, like "Oh, there's a weird ology? Talk to Alie Ward about it." That, to me, is doing it justice. I finally made it. So that was a big deal. But I think... oh my god, I would love to keep doing it for as long as I can because I just think that it gets more and more interesting. At this point I would say that getting this far, doing a year's worth, there's a part of me that really wants to be number one on the science charts.

**Steven:** Hell yeah.

**Alie:** Even just for five minutes, you know what I mean? This week we were #10, we go up and down, but I look at *Hidden Brain* and *Radio Lab*, and all these ones that are produced by people who work in offices and not their closets and I'm like, "I want to just top the science charts." Just for a day would be so cool. People ask me, "Do you think you're ever going to run out of ologies?" I'm like, "Dude, are there things on Earth?" There's an ology for *everything* on Earth. Anyone listening to this, look at an object around you, there's a science behind it which means that's there's someone who does it, you know what I mean?

**Steven:** Well what's been fun about the show is that you're not necessarily like, "All right, I'm gonna start with biology." You're following the muse as opposed to, "I have to be like the 101 topics."

**Alie:** Oh no, yeah, this whole shebang's on shuffle, dude. I don't know what's coming up next. I have no idea!

**Steven:** Everyone has their own playlist of *Ologies*.

**Alie:** Who knows? The whole the way that I schedule out the episodes is I just write the episodes... the ones that I've recorded, I write them on an index card and then I have them like a deck of cards so that I stagger them out and I'm like, "Okay, these two would go together... actually, let's take this one and put this down here." So, I always have a little pocket full of index cards and then I'm always shuffling them around. I don't know. I think I just want to keep making it and I want to get better at sleeping. That's another thing I want to do. I need to be better at sleeping eight hours a night.

**Steven:** There were a few self-care questions in there and it's like, "Look, we know the answer to that. We're working on it."

**Alie:** I'm interviewing a sleep specialist Friday!

**Steven:** Oh, wait just for fun, or for *Ologies*?

**Alie:** Have you met me?? Ya think?

**Steven:** Hey, I did the sensory dep tank.

**Alie:** How was it was?

**Steven:** It wasn't game-changing, but I liked it. That's my one thing I will say for everyone. It was great and maybe other people will get something out of it, but it wasn't game-changing.

**Alie:** I'm trying to be better at a life-work balance, but it's hard when you like your work a lot. I'm not mad at researching Cleopatra and her twin birth. I'm not mad at that. I'm like, "I'm learning so much!" But I do need to wash my hair more.

Thank you for a recording this with me because it feels very silly for me to be like, "Let me give you life advice." But it is also really nice that anyone cares about the voice behind the ologists.

**Steven:** No, I think people do, and I think... Yeah, again, thank you to everybody who submitted questions. Hopefully we got to some of it. Thanks, Alie.

**Alie:** Thanks Steven Ray Morris! Corndogs for life!

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As always ask smart people stupid questions, even if they aren't officially an ologist. Follow *Ologies* on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) @Ologies and follow @Alie Ward on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) as well. There are links in the show notes. Be sure to watch *Did I Mention Invention?* this Saturday, October 6 on the CW Network. There are also links to support the show on Patreon at [Patreon.com/Ologies](#), and you can get amazing merch at [OlogiesMerch.com](#). Feel free to tag or DM photos of you in it for #ologiesmerch for Merch Mondays on Instagram.

Thank you, Boni Dutch and Shannon Feltus for always helping with the merch and of course, thank you to Erin Talbert and Hannah Lipow for adminning the greatest place on the internet, the [Ologies Facebook group](#). Nick Thorburn made the music and is in a band called Islands. And you can find me, Steven Ray Morris, on Twitter and Instagram and listen to my podcasts *The Purrrcast*, *See Jurassic Right*, and *Popular Music* if cats, dinosaurs, and/or pop music is your thing.

This week's secret: my first PA job in Los Angeles was a Blue Man Group video. Since it was shot on a white background it became my job to Windex the blue smudges they left behind on the floor. Yep.

Okay, berbye.

*Transcribed by Kaydee Coast, the outgoing rubber duck collecting accountant.*

*Edits by Wendy Fick*

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