

“The Doors Story”
Told by Stuart McLean from The Vinyl Cafe

Caitlin Purvis, 28 years old, has always had an eye for an adventure and a nagging case of wanderlust. It’s a dangerous combination for a young woman with an unpaid student loan and not a lot of money in the bank. But Caitlin is resourceful, and has, since she graduated from university a few years ago, worked in a northern British Columbia fishing lodge or two, crewed on a billionaire’s yacht, interned on sustainability projects in Mexico, worked with seniors that have dementia, and is currently teaching English and Spanish at a Muslim school in Kuwait.

Caitlin is no slouch.

In 2008, the year I want to tell you about, the year she was 24, Caitlin was still in university, but in typical Caitlin style, she had arranged to finish her degree with a semester abroad at a university in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Actually, in even more typical Caitlin style, she was on route from Argentina to Ecuador, where her good friend was getting married to a shaman’s son in an Amazonian ceremony.

Are you starting to get the picture?

Caitlin had been up late the night before – well, to tell the truth, she hadn’t been to bed the night before. She went right from the club where she had been dancing, all night, to the airport where she was going to catch her flight to Ecuador. As usual, she was bringing her guitar with her.

Caitlin takes her guitar everywhere. She took it with her to India. Did I mention she had been to India? Well, she had, and when she went, she took her guitar. Because, as I said, she takes it everywhere.

Caitlin would never claim to be a great player. She would say she can sing okay, but would never claim to be a player. As for the songs she sings, mostly she writes them herself. And until recently, mostly she never finished them.

Caitlin figures she has written well over a hundred songs over the years – she always has scraps of paper all over the place with lyrics on them, but the songs tend to come and go – like the times of her life – she sings them for a while and

“The Doors Story”
Told by Stuart McLean from The Vinyl Cafe

then they become scraps of paper again. She lets them go once the situation she is singing about resolves itself.

Caitlin says her guitar is sort of like her journal.

Anyway. She didn't sleep that night, the night before she left for Ecuador, and she didn't sleep on the flight, so she had been up for a day and half by the time she landed and she was tired, and dehydrated, if you get my drift, and she wasn't paying a lot of attention to anything as she dug through the stack of luggage at the airport in Quito, looking for her guitar.

She was in a hurry. She was expected at a reception. A wine and chocolate party. She was hoping to clean up before it began.

And that is when someone said, “So you play the guitar do you?”

A young woman travelling by herself, especially in exotic places, learns certain coping skills. Caitlin didn't look up.

She picked up her guitar, mumbled something, and headed off.

But the man, it was a man, followed her.

“So, what kind of music do you play?” he asked.

Now. That was a good question.

Caitlin didn't know the answer to that.

She has always thought she has a jazzy, soulful kind of voice.

As for her guitar playing ... *it* was kind of beachy. Her strings were uncut and rusty. Her guitar was full of sand and picks from her last trip to the beach.

“How would you like to open for a show?” said the man

“I can't,” said Caitlin. “I am going to a party tonight.”

“You know what?” said the man, “You *are* going to open for a show tonight. You are going to open for The Doors.”

“The Doors Story”
Told by Stuart McLean from The Vinyl Cafe

That got her attention.

Caitlin looked at the man for the first time.

She said, “Jim Morrison is dead.”

She may have been a little shakey, but she was sure of *that*. The Doors are one of Caitlin’s favourite groups. She had visited Morrison’s grave in Paris when she was sixteen.

Yet the guy did have her attention. She stopped and looked around. And there, to her left, was Ray Manzarek. And to her right? Robby Krieger. The silver boxes she had just pushed out of her way to get her guitar held their instruments.

This is too weird, she thought.

She should have known that leaving a raging club in Buenos Aires, to hop on a 6 am flight to Ecuador, was not a good idea. She needed a glass of water.

And then it hit her.

It suddenly made sense.

She was on a reality show.

“Here are some VIP passes,” said the man “bring your friends. I need you to play five songs...you have five, right?”

Caitlin tried to tell him that they weren’t actually finished songs .. but he wasn’t listening. He had turned to someone else. “Fire the other band,” he said. “She’s hired!”

The guy clearly thought she was a better player than she was.

“But I didn’t say yes” said Caitlin.

“You haven’t heard me play.”

“The Doors Story”
Told by Stuart McLean from The Vinyl Cafe

The guy said, “You’re on at 8. Be there at 7.”

Caitlin took a taxi to the hostel in Quito where her friend was waiting for her. She showered and told her friend what had just happened at the airport. Her friend said, “We are going to the stadium.”

They decided to take her guitar, just in case.

Caitlin figured if the guy was actually serious, she would have time to finish writing a few of her songs before the show. But he probably wasn’t serious. After all, she had told him she had only ever played at a few open mikes before.

For maybe like ten people.

He had brushed that off.

“Ah,” he had said when she told him that, “playing for ten is way harder than playing for 10,000.”

The traffic around the La Casa de la Cultura was insane. The crowds were insane. It took much longer to get there than Caitlin had planned. And when she got there, it took over 45 minutes to get in. No one seemed to care too much about her VIP passes.

It must be a joke, she thought.

Then she found the Artists Door.

And then, to her *amazement*, she was standing backstage. And to her great *surprise*, everyone seemed delighted to see her.

“She came!” cried the man from the airport.

Not knowing what else to do, Caitlin pulled out her guitar and started to tune.

The audience was so loud and excited, however, she couldn’t hear herself.

She broke a string.

Some guy rushed around and found her a new one.

"The Doors Story"
Told by Stuart McLean from The Vinyl Cafe

If this was going to happen, she better finish writing those songs.

But someone was saying something to her. It was the guy from the airport, "You are on in 2 minutes," he said.

Caitlin looked at him in amazement.

"You're joking," she said.

He shook his head. And then he said, "No matter what happens out there, never apologize. Don't say you're sorry. Just keep playing. And after you have done four or five songs, introduce The Doors."

Before Caitlin knew it, she was sitting on a stage in front of 8,000 people.

"It started off fine," said Caitlin.

"I played a couple of songs and everything was fine. But during the third or fourth one it suddenly occurred to me I was staring at 8000 people. And they were all staring back at me."

Caitlin said everything started moving in slow motion.

She could feel herself starting to shake.

She couldn't remember what song she was singing.

And that's when she did what the man had just told her not to do.

She started apologizing.

People in the front row began shouting for The Doors.

Caitlin looked into the wings for help.

The man from the airport was standing there yelling at her. "You're doing great!" he was saying. "One more song!"

So she did one more song. And then she said,

“The Doors Story”
Told by Stuart McLean from The Vinyl Cafe

“Y ahora, LOS DOORS ...”

She left the stage to the sound of 8,000 people clapping - half she likes to think, for her, and half for one of the greatest rock bands of all time.

She was shaking when she got into the wings.

Caitlin says her twenty minutes on stage went by in about 30 seconds.

She says, she spent the rest of the show dancing on the side of the stage with her friends.

And she says, “The Doors were great. In fact, it was maybe the greatest concert of my life.”