

Episode 32 Lizzie Leaves Tech And Starts "The Humble Retreat"

Who	Audio Segment
Lizzie Fouracre	I've done a lot of interesting sort of retreats and workshops, and things in my life where you're, you know, self-development, or learning about yourself, or other people. But this was truly like the most healing thing I have ever done, because it was as simple as me, a tent, and just like peace, it was total peace. And it was during that time that I had, you know, this light bulb, never had it in my life moment, that where I was...it was so clear what I needed to do.
	INTRO MUSIC; FADE TO BACK DROP FOR PODCAST OVERVIEW
Andy Levine	<p>Welcome to Second Act Stories, a podcast that looks at people who have made major career changes and are pursuing more rewarding lives in a second act. I'm your host, Andy Levine.</p> <p>Today's episode is the first time, we've gone outside of the United States for a story. I was traveling to London for a business conference in November 2018. And in advance of the trip, I reached out Miriam Christie who works for a company called Careershifters. And when I described the Second Act Stories podcast to her, she told me "You really need to speak to Lizzie Fouracre."</p> <p>It turned out to be a great tip. Lizzie Fouracre is only 33 years old so she is a bit younger than many of the individuals we've profiled. But her story is terrific.</p> <p>She helped manage a fast-growing technology company started by her older brother. And while the pace of a technology start-up was exhilarating, over time she found herself wanting more from life. So she quit, packed up a tent and sleeping bag and decided take a six-week hike around Great Britain. And in a eureka moment at the top of a mountain in Wales, she decided to create a new venture called The Humble Retreat.</p> <p>Here's our interview with Lizzie Fouracre. And you'll also hear from Lizzie's mom, Mandy Fouracre. Or as we say in the UK, Lizzie's mum.</p>
Andy	Okay, tell me about how you got into the tech space, and what was your introduction to that?
Lizzie	I sort of was introduced to the tech space through a sales role, as my first sort of real job after university. And it was for a small company. And I was there for a couple of years starting to make, you know, all right money and after the student debt kind of world. And my brother in the meantime...he's four years older than me. He had set up his own technology business, so he was living in London, he'd set up this software for small businesses, and their accounts, you know, to help small businesses understand and manage their accounts. And he said, "You know, it's going somewhere, come and work for me."

Andy	So Lizzie joined her brother and helped him build a software company called Clear Books.
Lizzie	So when I joined Clear Books, it was just my brother who founded the company, Tim, my other brother John, who was sort of helping him support, and helping...uses, you know, get to grips with the software. And then two other developers, and me, so five in total. And then I was there for seven years, and, you know, through that seven years, it changed quite dramatically.
Andy	During that seven-year period, the company earned two rounds of venture funding and grew from 5 to 50 people.
Andy	Most times when you think about a tech job, it's pretty crazy. Was it a crazy lifestyle in terms of working long hours, lots of pressure, lots of hard work?
Lizzie	Changes were happening all the time. We worked in a very agile environment, so literally, you know, a new project would be released, or a new feature and software would be released. So we were having to update our customers constantly, we were having to support our customers constantly. So it was...and the pressure, yeah, the pressure in terms of it being a successful business to pay us was there, but also the pressure that it was my brother's business was also an added thing.
Andy	I gather from reading your bio, you moved up to being sort of the chief operating officer of the company, so that's an awful lot of responsibility for a 29-year-old, something like that?
Lizzie	Yeah, I would have been 29 at the time. And it was, yeah, because I had grown with the company in many roles mostly around sales and marketing, and sort of managing those teams as well. But yeah, then taking on the responsibility of everybody, it was a different feeling, and a huge responsibility.
Andy	Talk about the process of the decision of leaving the company and deciding, "I need to do something else." How did that come about?
Lizzie	Yes, so I think in the last two to three years of my time at Clear Books, I felt quite lost, I felt that I wasn't really living my truth. And it was instant, it was almost like a push of the button because I've lived in London for eight years. I've always loved London, used to cycle to work, you know, I was a proper Londoner living the London life, and enjoying my job in this speed of life. But it was, like I say, like a button was pressed, and suddenly I was like, "No, I don't want this anymore." And it was an instant, I went into Tim, and said, "I don't wanna be here anymore."
Andy	Lizzie took another job but that lasted only two weeks. And just a few months earlier, she broke up with her finance. So it was a pretty stressful time for her.

Lizzie	<p>Yeah, so I hit a pretty big low, you know, I've had depression throughout my 20s, I battled with depression when I was at Clear Books, interestingly I was also battling an eating disorder. So as well as working for this, you know, cool tech company, I was battling my own sort of journey.</p> <p>I had decided that London was no longer serving me, and those kind of personal events made me realize that, "Yeah, I need to take like a u-turn," not even a u-turn, "I need to take a different direction and it needs to come from me."</p>
Andy	So when the going got tough, she wisely headed home to mom and dad.
Lizzie	<p>I hit probably one of my lowest bouts of depression. And I took sanctuary at my parents, they very warmly and lovingly opened up, you know, their home and love, and support for me. And, you know, I was in this mess where I couldn't get out of bed, I was very negative. But this was just one of those times where I just needed to feel that wallow, and just live in it, and that's what was happening.</p> <p>But I also didn't wanna be in that wallowing situation, so I took myself out of it by physically taking myself away. And I said to my parents, "I'm gonna take my tent, and a few things, I've mapped out a route, and I'm gonna walk around the UK. And I'm just gonna take two months just to be in nature, to live simply, have no distractions of, you know, people, or things that are going on, and the normal everyday life. So I did, and that's what I did.</p>
Andy	And a walk in the woods is just what Lizzie needed.
Lizzie	I've done a lot of interesting sort of retreats and workshops, and things in my life where you're, you know, self-development, or learning about yourself, or other people. But this was truly like the most healing thing I have ever done, because it was as simple as me, a tent, and just like peace, it was total peace. And it was during that time that I had, you know, this light bulb, never had it in my life moment, that where I was...it was so clear what I needed to do.
Andy	Talk about that light bulb moment, I'm very interested in...you know, how did that happen? What happened?
Lizzie	<p>I was walking... I was in Wales, and I'd never been to Wales before, but it was just filled with mountains, totally beautiful, breathtaking, something majestic about them anyway. And I was walking up the most famous one, it was called Snowdonia.</p> <p>And this particular day, there were blizzards, the mountain rangers are like, "You know, if you're gonna go up, just seriously take care because it's not great conditions." I think I'd seen one or two other people en route, when the other days, you know, there were crowds of people walking up. So I was very much alone on that particular day.</p>

Andy	And that's where the idea for "The Humble Retreat" came to her.
Lizzie	was walking and it was literally like a clear message as if someone was saying to me, "Lizzie, you need to set up something called 'The Humble Retreat.' It needs to be a space where you can welcome people that might not normally have the courage to go out on their own walking, or spending time alone. And just give and create a space, a safe space where people can come and restore and reset, and just take joy in the simple life, really."
Andy	She called her brother Tim.
Lizzie	So I had this kind of...yeah, this light bulb moment. As soon as I got into signal, I called Tim because, you know, he inspires me, and he's very sensible, he's got a lot of good advice. And I ran the idea by him, and he bought the domain name straight away, he was like, "Yeah this is it, this is what you're meant to be doing." So he bought my website domain name...
Andy	Which is The Humble Retreat?
Lizzie	TheHumbleRetreat.com.
Andy	So she had a name and a website domain. And she actually had a physical location which Lizzie came up earlier in her walkabout the UK.
Lizzie	So when I was in Shropshire before I got to Wales, there was this really lovely bunkhouse that I walked past through the hills. At the time, I didn't realize how significant it would be in my life. I saw that and for some reason, it stuck in my mind, and then when it came to planning The Humble Retreat, I was like, "I know exactly where I wanna host it," and that was that. So I've been there for...well, been hosting it there for 18 months now.
Andy	So tell me, what exactly is The Humble Retreat?
Lizzie	So The Humble Retreat is a weekend for people to come and restore, reset, and just take time for themselves in a mindful way. So there's lots of gentle yoga, there's beautiful walks, wholesome food cooked by my mum, and various mindfulness workshops to sort of share my practices that I use. That I know are helpful for anybody that's struggling with anything in their life.
Andy	Lizzie's mom, Mandy Fouracre, plays a central role in The Humble Retreat. I got to speak with her by telephone about the first retreat that Lizzie and Mandy managed.

Mandy Fouracre	<p>It was just so exciting, that first Humble Retreat. Lizzie had prepared an outline of what would happen. A sort of semi-structure. And I said to Lizzie when we arrived, we cleaned the bunkhouse and then I said, you know, "During this weekend, I am really here to serve. So, I'm just going to serve, clean, cook, you know, and sort of just look after the home. And then you're free to lead and do, you know, to serve the people that come as guests."</p> <p>And it was just fantastic. Every single group, by the end of the weekend, it's like a family. It's like this amazing, close-knit family. And I know it just sounds a little, like, really incredible, but you just sort of have this great feeling of love towards other human beings.</p>
Andy	<p>I want you to take me back, if you can, to the first weekend. So, you were there helping Lizzie, you're working. All the guests leave. What was the conversation like between the two of you after everyone had departed?</p>
Mandy	<p>I think we just hugged each other and shed a few tears, I think. And we were just totally blown away by the whole thing because it was just fantastic, and it was just wonderful to be part of it. And actually, I mean, that was the first...on that first weekend, and strangely thereafter, I never doubted that whichever group of people turned up, it would not be the same. It was always the same.</p> <p>And I feel people find it healing. It's a healing...it's a safe zone and it's just natural. It's very sort of basic. And no Wi-Fi, no phone signal.</p> <p>And it's just like stepping off the world for three days.</p>
Andy	<p>Stepping off the world for three days? That sounds pretty good to me.</p> <p>Let's go back to Lizzie. I asked her about a phrase that she kept coming back to in our interview.</p>
Andy	<p>You've used the term a couple of times, "living your truth," and I just wanna make sure I understand what that means to you.</p>
Lizzie	<p>Yes, so living your truth is listening to your intuition, and not being afraid to act on it regardless of what worries you might have from any onlookers. And it's taking the courage to truly do what you know brings you happiness.</p>
Andy	<p>For anyone who isn't feeling fulfilled in their work, what advice would you give them about exploring a second act?</p>

Lizzie	<p>I think when you're in something that you don't know is right for you, you also probably have a hobby or an interest that you know is amazing, you really enjoy. So I think starting to hone in on those other interests that bring you joy, to start taking them a little bit more seriously, and maybe less of a sort of label of hobby or interest. There's a lot of pressure, again, with society that you have to live this certain life, 9 to 5, or more than 9 to 5, or, you know, flogging yourself until you're ill or have a breakdown.</p> <p>I truly believe that sort of having space and quietness and stillness, and for me, that was nature and just being by myself, you're able to suddenly listen louder to that thing that is more important to you than, you know, your 9 to 5 job.</p>
Andy	<p>Lizzie and Mandy Fouracre have been successfully running "The Humble Retreat" for the past 18 months. If you are ready to step off the world for three days, I suggest you give them a call.</p>
	<p>OUTGOING MUSIC; FADE TO BACK DROP FOR PODCAST CONCLUSION</p>
Andy	<p>So that is a wrap on Episode 32 of "Second Act Stories." Our special thanks to Lizzie Fouracre for sitting down with me during my trip to London. And it was an absolute pleasure to speak with her mum by telephone.</p> <p>As I think about Lizzie's story, it took me back to an earlier podcast episode which we titled "Exiting The Courtroom: A Trial Lawyer Finds Nature Photography." In this story, a high-powered lawyer named Richard Turner decided one morning to pack his sleeping bag and head out into the American West for a month of reflection. And during that trip, a voice reached out to him as well. And his new direction was clear.</p> <p>So for both Lizzie and Richard, getting into a quiet, peaceful setting away from the chaos of everyday life was a critical element of finding their second act. So if you find yourself conflicted about your career or life path, you might want to take a lesson from both of them and head for a long, long walk in the woods.</p> <p>On a different theme, it was also incredibly powerful to hear both Lizzie and Mandy talk about the joy they both found working together. The two have always been close but the start-up of The Humble Retreat brought this mother-daughter team even closer.</p> <p>That's today's story. We hope you'll keep listening. There are more second act stories just around the corner.</p>