Episode 12: Scaredy Pack
Jenny: You are listening to the Slack.

Speaker 2: Variety Pack.

Jenny: A collection of stories about work.

Speaker 3: Life, and everything between.

Jenny: Brought to you by Slack, if you don't know what Slack is, head over to slack.com and change your working life forever. On this episode, quit your job and travel around the world, but be prepared to work.

Speaker 5: Even though we have had some tough times scrubbing toilets and cleaning chicken coops, we've been able to do things on our terms.

Jenny: What it's like to book an overnight stay at a tech start up.

Speaker 6: It would great to be on lists when they say "Unusual Places to Stay" in different parts of the world. I saw one where you could stay at a ski jump in Norway, you could stay in a tree house in Portland, and you should stay at a start up in San Francisco.

Jenny: When your mid-life crisis takes you down a very unexpected career path.

Speaker 7: What the hell are you doing working here?

Speaker 8: Ouch.

Jenny: But first, Halloween is just around the corner. If you still need a costume idea, look no further than some modern day job descriptions.

Speaker 2: Slack Variety pack?

Speaker 9: Yeah.

Speaker 2: Cool.

Speaker 4: Making Work Less Worky.

Dave: Halloween is approaching and maybe you're looking for a costume. Maybe you're looking for a job, either way we've got you covered. We searched through some online classified ads and found ten real job descriptions that would also make pretty great Halloween costumes.

Human Resources Rock star: Long hair, leather pants, eye make-up, but a shirt that complies with top organizational objectives.

Code Ninja: This costume would be a lot like a regular ninja costume, but instead of swords strapped to your back, a dual monitor set up. Occasionally pull down your ninja mask to sip from a can of energy drink.
Customer Support Super Hero: "It's a bird!", "It's a plane!", "It's a person wearing a cape and a phone headset!" (Can we put you on hold?). Don't worry about any suspicious Halloween candy. It's being monitored for quality assurance purposes.

Marketing Guru: Long flowing robes, a long flowing beard, and a power point presentation on achieving zen, or at least measurably increasing zen awareness.

Spreadsheet Wizard: "Are those Harry Potter glasses or accountant glasses?" "A little from column A, a little from column B."

Jedi Nanny: A diaper bag full of light sabers, a cloak full of juice boxes, and instead of carrying Yoda on your back, just push him in a stroller.

Graphic Design Minion: This one's easy. Just one of those yellow minion costumes, and then just go on and on about kerning.

Social Media Sherpa: Think ropes, walking sticks, giant backpacks, and oxygen tanks, but also don't look up from your iPhone the entire time.

Technical Evangelist: A big booming voice, a beautiful head of hair, and go around healing people with the power of your palm pilots.

Bad-Ass Admin Assistant: This costume requires you to answer phones, type schedule, file, take notes, but also wear a bad ass leather jacket.

Happy Halloween, or happy job hunting. Whatever.

Jenny:

You know what's really scary? Change. There's nothing more terrifying than changing your entire career. We have two stories of people who have given up everything and gone against the grain in the hopes of finding more meaning in their work, and in their lives.

We've all seen this kind of headline before. A couple quits their jobs to travel around the world. And then we see their gorgeous photos on Instagram, we tun a tiny shade of green, and we contemplate making the same jump. What does it really take to make this particular dream into a reality? Is it as amazing as the pictures make it out to be? Here's one couple who took the plunge. They break down their process.

Chanel:

Hi, I'm Chanel and I've got Steve right here with me. We quit our jobs about seven months ago from Sunny South Africa to Johannesburg. We decided to give it all up so we could follow our dreams, and travel the world, whilst doing so get a bit of creative inspiration.

Stevo:

I lived in Johannesburg my entire life. I followed almost the path that one should follow. I went to college, then I got a job and I'm not saying I wasn't happy, but I felt that in order to be a better creative myself, you have to be curious, and you have to go search for things.
Chanel: I wanted to look differently. If this is what I am supposed to be striving towards ... This materialistic world where I make good money and then I spend it on things and it wasn't satisfying me at the end of the day. I wasn't feeling fulfilled and I think I wanted to see how the rest of the world works, and see if I could play a bigger part in it I guess.

Stevo: We saved for a year. We obviously knew that this would cost money to do and you can't travel around the world without cash. We set up how much we wanted to save each month and what we had to get done in order to leave, if you've got stuff holding you back when you're living in a city, i.e. A house, a car, things that you need to pay off, that's going to stop you. We needed to get enough of an action plan of what we wanted to do and we take forth all those to do lists.

Chanel: We paid off our loans, we opened a separate savings account for this trip, and we started declining dinner dates. We started ... I particularly had to stop shopping. It was hard. It was a tough year because you're not doing what you work so hard for.

Christian: Passport please.

Jenny: After a year of planning and saving, Chanel and Steve left for their adventure. Their goals: challenge themselves to get outside their comfort and safety zones, and spark creative thinking. Their motto, "Collect experiences, not things." They have collected experiences outside their comfort zone but not at all in the way they were expecting it to be. They had signed up with Work Away, a site for budget travelers that list places to stay in exchange for volunteer work. Urban life as creative professionals, didn't really prepare them for the kinds of work they had to do.

Stevo: We've cleaned chicken coops. We've scooped dog poop, we've built pathways, we've chopped wood, we've stacked wood, we've worked in a back of a kitchen.

Chanel: Around the half way marks, about a month ago, I wrote quite an honest blog post. Even though, we've had some tough times scrubbing toilets and cleaning chicken coops, we've been able to do things on our terms. We've been able to explore the world and cycle around mud lakes in Sweden and drive up to the most northern point of Europe and eat at the number one restaurant in the world. These are all experiences that we'll never forget, if that means that we have to do a little bit of hard work to get those things. Then I think it's a pretty good example to say that hard work does get you where you want to be.

Jenny: Amazingly, despite the tough work situations, financial challenges and the stress of travel, Chanel and Stevo have managed to keep their relationship in tact.

Stevo: We've spent the last 7 months together. I think the longest time we've had off is been about 3 hours away from each other. To be honest it's worked
out better than I thought. We don't bicker these days. I think we just get along really well.

Chanel: Also, a journey like this also teaches you how to adapt and how to let go of things and how to go with the flow and how to compromise. All these life lessons that we are learning on the journey, we are applying ...

Stevo: In our relationship ...

Chanel: In our relationship, if anything this is molding our relationship [crosstalk 00:09:03] so ...

Jenny: Still need some convincing to take the plunge like Chanel and Steve and drop everything to travel around the world? Here's some final advice.

Chanel: No matter how hard it may seem, the hardest part was I think was actually taking the plunge. Now that we're in it, you'll live day to day and you love it because you don't know what's coming next. You just adapt and go with the flow.

Stevo: It's something we really wanted to do and that passion was burning from within and we did it. It feels so good.

Chanel: So, so good.

Stevo: Keep tracking Chanel and Stevo's adventures on their blog. How Far From Home. What started off as a [inaudible 00:09:43] tour is now turning into an on going journey. Not surprisingly, their bucket-list of places to go, [inaudible 00:09:50] called the wonder-list keeps on growing.


Chanel: Overlooking the coast in Costa Na in Italy.

Stevo: Exploring Canada.

Chanel: Hiking [inaudible 00:10:02] with the Koala in Australia. Visiting Tokyo in Japan and staying up all night like the scene from Lost In Translation. Standing outside The Full house house in San Francisco.

Stevo: I think getting as far away in distance from Johannesburg is one our ... Is on our and that's why ...

Chanel: Still a lot to do.

Stevo: We check our list we can still go on for about five minutes.

Jenny: Slack working better, together.

Speaker 24: Channel change. Changing career.
Jenny: They say you never know what life is going to throw at you. Well, this is a true story about lucky breaks but not in anyway you had typically imagined.

Jordan: You know how things work, workwise right. You graduate, you start off with a Joe job in retail or landscaping to pay rent. Then you get a lucky break in your field and you build a career, success. I did just the opposite. This is the true story of how I left a big career for a Joe job. I used to work in the television industry. 20 plus years directing and producing. Traveled the world. I was really good at it.

Today I work with food. Good, good food but this isn't a story about a guy finding his passion midlife and getting rich off what he loves. There're lots of those out there. This is a story about a guy who learned how to be a grocery boy. Yes, this is my real story and believe it or not. It's anything bad a bad suck one.

The minute details of what led me from filmstar to grocery-smoke aren't really important. [inaudible 00:12:12] out, divorced, depression. A retirement that went from three months to three long years. Then one day the money was gone. The phone stopped ringing. The contacts forgotten. I came out for air and who or what I was. How do I want to spend my days now?

Jordan: Can I help you find something today?

Jordan: It was a good friend of mine that said "Why would you go back to that insular world producing TV shows you never watch? Go find your happy place." "Happy place." Is that a thing? Sure, everyone calls themselves a foodie but I read cook books in the tub. I get a rush looking at dead fish on ice. On Monday I already know what I'm planning to cook on Thursday, whether or not you like it. You can see pictures of all of it on Facebook.

Jenny5: Can you help me find the peanut butters?

Jenny6: Yeah, yeah. Follow me.

Jordan: I bring in the product.

Jenny7: Oh, jeez!

Jordan: Stock the shelves and tell people what turns my [inaudible 00:13:20] crank. " [inaudible 00:13:21] this one changed my life. You got to try this." Why? I need some kind of re-assurance, some insight. I called Doctor Joe Mausner in New York. A psychologist who deals in careers. I needed to know is my happy place okay? I'm I throwing away my skills to make some kind of point? I'm I crazy?
Joe Mausner.: No. You're not crazy. Especially if that really is your happy place and it is making you happy. You have found something authentic and and very sane but can you live off that is a real consideration. Financially.

Jordan: I probably can't, long term no, but see I'm not slamming it for the irony. I'm not doing this for the story. I genuinely love it. I make people happy. I'm one with food [inaudible 00:14:13] with me.

Joe Mausner.: You know, people are looking for meaning in life. People are looking for more joy in life. I mean, money and career success are not everything.

Jordan: For a while I was floating above the ice until the inevitable happened. On my hands and knees putting away boxes of [inaudible 00:14:36] pasta. I heard a familiar voice asking where the [inaudible 00:14:39] lived and there she was. A former and bigshot television executive. Then she said the words ...

Jenny9: What the hell are you doing working here?

Jordan: Ouch!

Joe Mausner.: Well, yeah. I mean it definitely can be a stigma. It does ... It depends on the social set you hang out with. It also depends on the way you stigmatize yourself but a big part of people making this adjustment is separating themselves from expectations that are in one way or another externally imposed. They're not really your authentic self. They're not really what you would truly wish to be doing or even the way you would truly evaluate your own success in life, if you could just free yourself of those external standards.

Jordan: It's a matter of turning off that voice that cares what others may see or say.

Joe Mausner.: In [inaudible 00:15:44] we would use the word [inaudible 00:15:46] it gives you a lot of [inaudible 00:15:47] which means joy but nonetheless you're struggling with ... You are still struggling some with the societal expectations. You haven't [inaudible 00:15:59] that into a more [inaudible 00:16:01] place where you can look at those TV and first of all perhaps notice hoe stressed out they are as opposed to you being relatively content. Number two maybe they are happy but then you just have to accept that you are different people and what ... What makes them happy is not what makes you happy.

Jordan: [inaudible 00:16:29] won't last forever. I may not be leaving a legacy inside this store but today this is where you'll find me. In my happy place.

Joe Mausner.: What you've done takes courage. Not financially but in other ways that courage is being rewarded.

Speaker 20: Thanks, have a good weekend.
Jordan: Yeah. Don't ... don't ever cook that okay?
Jenny: Slack variety pack, let us know what you think. Tweet us at slackhq.
Speaker 24: Channel change modern life.
Dave: Everyday we are [inaudible 00:17:16] with notifications from our phones, our computers, our tablets. Some of these notifications make us happy but others cause different levels of fear and anxiety. In honor of these spooky time of year we present The Ten Levels of Fear ... Caused by digital notifications.
Speaker 23: Level one: Your pizza has now entered the oven.
Speaker 22: [inaudible 00:17:47] put on pants.
Speaker 23: Level two: [inaudible 00:17:50] low on ink.
Speaker 22: Yeah. I will get right on that.
Speaker 23: Level three: Updates require you to restart.
Speaker 22: Well, remind me tomorrow ... Or don't.
Speaker 23: Level four: You have three, Facebook events today.
Speaker 22: [inaudible 00:18:06] if you say so.
Speaker 23: Level five: Your computer may be at risk to malware.
Speaker 22: You bet, it may not.
Speaker 23: Level six: One missed call. Followed six minutes later by a voice mail.
Speaker 22: Oh, mom.
Speaker 23: Level seven: Emergency radar alert.
Speaker 22: I didn't know this phone even did that!
Speaker 23: Level eight: Phone storage approaching capacity.
Speaker 22: I only have 20000 photos on there.
Speaker 23: Level nine: Phone battery at 10%.
Speaker 22: Don't you die on me.
Speaker 23: Level ten: No notifications at all.
Speaker 22: Why hasn't anybody liked my post? Maybe I'm the only one left. Oh, My pizza is here.
Speaker 21: This has been The Ten Levels of Fear ... Caused by digital notifications.

Jenny: Share this story with friends go to Soundcloud.com/slacksingleservings.

Speaker 24: Channel change [inaudible 00:19:33] .

Jenny: When we imagine the inside of a San Francisco tech start up. We think of adjustable stand up desks, [inaudible 00:19:48] of monitors ans a kitchen stock full of snacks and energy drinks. We don't usually associate it with sleepovers until now. Check out what's got to be one of Airbnb weirdest listings.

Steve: Tonight I'm doing an experiment. Just walking up this sidewalk in San Francisco to my accommodation over the evening. I'm going to be sleeping in the office of a San Francisco start up. Hello?

Speaker 26: [inaudible 00:20:27] .

Steve: I'm Steve.

Speaker 26: Steve. I'm Janie. Come on in.

Steve: All right. How are you? Social Print Studio. A company that makes prints of your Instagram photos has done something unique. They've listed there 6000 square foot warehouse office on Airbnb.

Speaker 26: We made you a pillow with you face on it.

Steve: Look at that. Wow!

Speaker 26: Sleep [inaudible 00:20:48] .

Steve: Okay there is a pillow with my face printed on it.

Speaker 26: Yeah.

Steve: I guess that's want you guys do. Right?

Speaker 26: Yeah, we print on stuff and then you there and they were like "Yeah this is really going to freak him out when he arrives."

Steve: Mission accomplished.

Speaker 26: [inaudible 00:21:00] good.

Steve: Meet company co-founder George Silven.

George Silven.: We're already at the top of Google but it's not like any companies that are trying to be at the top of Airbnb for any reason but we thought maybe we will be. We can ... We've got three bedrooms we can host people relatively easily and well. Make them have a good time and we can quite cheaply because it's not really about making money. It's just about having
a unique experience for people. It will great on be on that list when they say "Unusual places to stay in different parts of the world." I saw one where you can stay in a ski-jump in Norway. You can stay in a treehouse in Portland and you should stay at a start up in San Francisco. It makes sense.

Steve: Ben Lowton is the CEO of Social Print Studio.

Ben Lowton.: The level that we're shooting for is relatively comfortable. You're not going to sleep on the floor. You're going to have clean sheets and towels and it's going to be okay but really the draw here is you're staying in a company.

Steve: I quickly discovered that the Airbnb listing is far from the weirdest thing about Social Print Studio.

Tim.: I'm Tim I've [inaudible 00:22:04] in the company for about four years now.

Steve: Here at this giant wood cable in middle of the office and you used to sleep inside it?

Tim.: Yes, yes. There's a time where our company built this series of what we called sleeping boxes. Which were workstations/sleeping areas. We were sleeping right we work. Waking up the next day just [inaudible 00:22:21].

Steve: Is that ... This is like a coffin. You don't close yourself in there do you?

Tim.: Yeah. It's pretty nice. It's got enough air.

Steve: Seriously these are a lot like coffins. Why wouldn't you just put a mattress on top. Sleep on top?

Tim.: Everybody says that but when they're [inaudible 00:22:36] appropriately they will be just covered with [inaudible 00:22:39].

Steve: Now to be clear. The Airbnb guests have real beds. They aren't expected to stay in sleeping boxes but they can if they want to. I did not want to.

Tim.: [inaudible 00:22:47].

Steve: That's very kind of you though. The office is a lot like a giant fort. Everywhere you look there're secret ladder and hidey holes.

Tim.: Hidey holes is like the treehouse you're kind of [inaudible 00:22:57] to get in there.

Steve: Let's go.

Tim.: [inaudible 00:22:59].

Steve: Wow! You got a couch up here. How did you get a couch up here? It's all part of Ben grand design.
Ben Lowton.: When you're a kid you want to make lots of little spaces and hideaways. I guess I had that same goal in mind when designing this space.

Steve: The office is also filled with startling pieces of art, like a meat grinder filled with plastic hands.

Tim.: That's just some of the statement at same point.

Steve: A microwave on a peddlestone in middle the office to shame everyone who uses it.

Tim.: It's the shaming quarter.

Steve: A [inaudible 00:23:34] residence who's building a real swamp inside the office.

Speaker 27: Everybody in my interview like this swamp-like environments that I created.

Steve: A large [inaudible 00:23:44] goat head above the toilet.

Tim.: It'll intimidate you.

Steve: Yes.

Tim.: Make sure you flush.

Steve: It's kind of what I would imagine it would be like if Burningman and Tim Barton shared an office. [inaudible 00:23:57].

Tim.: Oh, jeez. I don't even know. This one of those undiscovered phases.

Steve: You see, the company was started as part of Ben's Masters of Fine Arts degree. To see how a company would if it was an art project. I'm sleeping not just in office but in a living, breathing art installation. Here is co-founder George again.

George Silven.: We're always are asking how can we make the company cooler and crazier. We're in the company and we want to work in a place which is weird and has that kind of thing. A lot of offices feel sterile as for just a hashtag business, hashtag normal. Maybe we've gone too far the other but it does seem like it's going to be fun.

Steve: I honestly feel like I'm in the middle of an episode of [inaudible 00:24:38] right now. Yeah, what's in here?

Tim.: This is the music jam room. We've got full drum kits, we've got amps, we've got guitars. We've got banjo.

Steve: Before you know it the work day has ended. Have a good night.

Speaker 26: Thank you. See you ...
Steve: See you tomorrow.

Speaker 26: See you tomorrow.

Ben Lowton.: We're the only two people here. Everybody just for the day.

Steve: Left alone with the CEO of a cool tech start up. I was expecting a conversation about the business. Nope.

Ben Lowton.: We've have these buckets of dirt right behind me. We used to have them all out on the conference table. It was just the dirt conference table like "We should probably do something with the dirt tonight."

Steve: I wanted to [inaudible 00:25:15] the dirt less than I wanted to spent the night in a sleeping box. I made another suggestion. "You know what I was thinking, I think we should jam."

Ben Lowton.: [inaudible 00:25:29] pretty happy that you're here because it just made me ... You know, you see it from that other perspective of like "Just an outsider is coming here." Then yeah crazy.

Steve: What's the [inaudible 00:25:40] view of my stay? The people are wonderful. It was the most creative office space I've ever seen. It was clearly weird with a capital W. I don't think it's a place I'd stay regularly. What I love is that Social Print Studio is a true original. As an Instagram photo printing service they're turning people's memories into tangible physical objects. As an office they're doing exactly the opposite. They're using physical space to create memories. They've certainly given me a one of a kind experience that I will never forget.

Ben Lowton.: I think that was pretty tight.

Steve: It's about 12.20 in the morning, if you excuse me, I'm very tired I need to go to sleep on a pillow with a picture of my own head on it.

Jenny: You've been listening to episode 12 of the Slack variety pack.

Speaker 24: Next episode.


Speaker 28: All of these people wrote books, Lisa. They all did it. Why not me?

Jenny: A law professor goes from courtroom to race track as she attempts to break a cycling world record.

Speaker 29: We're starting to hear ...

Speaker 30: Is it the last [crosstalk 00:27:08] .

Jenny: The benefits of working remotely.
Speaker 31: It's extremely talented people all over the world and how would you want to cut yourself off from them. Our feeling has always been hire the best you can. It doesn't matter where they live. Where they live is secondary.

Speaker 24: The detail.

Jenny: We like to call each of our stories single servings and each single serving is shareable. Go to soundcloud.com/slackingleservings and share your favorites. You can also share the entire episode at soundcloud.com/slackvarietypack. Want to know more about this broadcast? Go to slack.com/varietypack. Subscribe on iTunes, Stitcher or however you listen to your broadcasts. Thank you for listening to the Slack variety pack.

Speaker 32: Slack.

Speaker 33: Making work less worky.