

Rosa Linda Román: Hello and welcome to New Mexi-Castaways. I'm Rosa Linda Román and this is the very end of 2018 that I am recording this broadcast, this podcast. I'm calling or talking to you from Austin, Texas. Actually, Round Rock is where we live, and I'm on my way to meet the dog trainer to get our sweet Nala dog back, and I'll get into that in a minute.

Actually, I'll get into that after I get rid of the spider that is sitting here on my window because I just almost touched it. So, please stand by.

Okay, sorry, I'm back. I'm having flashbacks to the time we were at Walt Disney World, and we were in a rental car. I think it was a rental car. And Ahava was next to me, and all of a sudden, a spider started running across the dash and like on her window, and then it ran toward me, and it was like everywhere.

And I was trying not to get us killed, but it was a big scary spider, like tarantula kind of spider. And I was swerving and trying to just pull to the side of the road so we could get the spider out. And I was screaming and it was not good. So, luckily in this case, the spider just kind of went away.

It hid somewhere. He'll probably come out while I'm driving on the highway. Anyway, so happy end of 2018. If you're listening to this later, happy, whatever it is, time that you're listening. It's December 28th and I just got back from Chicago last night, late last night after a very delayed flight.

We went to Chicago, the kids and I for Christmas to celebrate with my family, because they celebrate Christmas. We celebrated Hanukkah at the beginning of December, because we're Jewish. And so, we've basically had a lot of celebrations lately, a lot, and it's been kind of challenging to have just like a normal schedule as there have been so many fun get togethers going on, but I really tried to use the time just to stay present and not try to solve the world's problems or do too much of any one thing. Mostly just be there with the people that I love and not try to do too much analyzing of what we are going to do, what's next as is, if you guys have listened for any length of time, you know What's Next was the name of the Dawn Treader, the boat that we lived on last. Before she was the Dawn Treader, she was called What's Next? So, I like to use that term a lot because it seems to apply to our life quite a bit.

As for what's next right now, that's a very, very, very good question. Now that I'm back in Austin, I think all of us are starting to wonder what's next. And literally as I was heading to get into the car, I was talking to Nathan and I said, "Yeah, you know, we really need to have a date night and just sit down and do some soul searching and figure out what we want."

And I'll give you a little backstory in a minute, but he said, "Well, we could move to Canada." And in the past, any other time in my life I would've been like, "You are crazy." But he has a business opportunity in Canada, and there's a company that's looking to bring him on as a consultant in the medical side of their business and one of his longtime business associates lives up there. Incidentally, his ex-fiance also lives up there, so that would be a little weird, but luckily, she's not someone that's in our lives or that I have to be concerned about.

And Canada's a big country anyway, so yeah, I kind of was like, "Okay, well if we're really going to talk about this, about the possibility..." Because what he said is, we could live in Canada for a year. And I said, "Well, if there's any conversation involving Canada, it has to also involve at least two trips to Puerto Rico and two trips to The Bahamas in that year."

In other words, at least quarterly we need to be in some tropical place. So, he said, "Okay, that seems fair." So, I don't know if we're really talking about the possibility of moving to Canada for a year, but we are definitely actively talking about possibilities. Let me just kind of sum up how December has gone, because it comes on the heels of NaNoWriMo, which is where I wrote 50,000 words of my memoir as part of the National Novel Writer's Month.

NaNoWriMo is short for that. And I am considered a NaNoWriMo winner, but what that means is I get bragging rights, but not much else. In other words, I have to still finish the book, and that's what I thought I was going to be doing in December, really editing and working and pulling it all together, getting it ready for publication.

Realistically, that didn't happen. I did a little bit of editing, but mostly I went back to my old habit of saying, I want to write, but not actually writing. So, I have to start the new year. And it is my intention to make finishing that book a priority, maybe even call it a New Year's Resolution. There's a few other things I want to decide on or choose as my resolutions, one of which is to write actual letters to people in the new year, because one of the things I always loved is getting mail and getting a note from people who I enjoy. And so, I'm going to try to do the same. And spread that love forward through the mail.

Anyway, so that's what what's on my mind. We went to Chicago. Nathan worked his clinicals in New Mexico during that week because he always works Christmas because he figures if he works Christmas, someone who is Christian, who the holiday really matters to will be able to be off.

And so, I know that's a very sweet thing that he does. It makes me a little sad because, you know, I don't want to be selfish, but also, my kids are off of school, and just like everybody else's kids, and that's the time that I see my extended family. This trip I got to see, so we got there like a week ago or maybe a little more than that. I guess it was like eight days we were gone and the day after we arrived was my niece's 11th birthday party and we went to a, it was one of those trampoline parks. So, we went and had a really great time jumping and playing with my brother and his son, my sister, it was her family and my kids. And those are the kinds of things that I would love to have Nathan there with us, because I think he is just as playful as I am when it comes to this kind of stuff and it makes me sad that he is not able to join us.

So, that was the first night. Then the next day we went to my extended family's Christmas get together, that's the Stapley family. That's my mom's side of the family. They're a German, Irish, Scottish mix of family, just to give you a visual picture in your mind. And there's a lot of really yummy food.

And we do what they call Dirty Santa, where you bring a gift and then people steal each other's gifts. So, it's kind of like a white elephant. And that was very fun. And it was really. See my cousins. I have a lot of first cousins. In fact, I have, I counted at one point, I have a hundred first cousins, a huge, huge family. So then, I got to see that side. That was Saturday.

Then Sunday was my immediate family's holiday get together, and that was with my sibling, and my parents and all of their families, their kids, and some of, like my brother has grandkids, so it was that whole side of the family, my immediate family, except for my brother Nathaniel and his family, because they are in Germany, in Stuttgart. He's stationed there with the Marines. So, Nathaniel wasn't with us, but the rest were there. My sister Rebecca and her family, Sara and her family, Jose and his family, and my parents were all there.

So, that was a lot of fun. We actually had toward the party, not to air too much family laundry, but we had a big kind of blowout fight at the end, which I wouldn't even be talking about, except that I feel like it was a blessing in disguise. It was very emotional and it just was, you know how, I don't know how your family is, but like sometimes when you're so busy in your life and everybody else is so busy in their lives, you don't always get the chance to actually have conversations together.

And sometimes things get lost along the way and people get their feelings hurt or things that need to be said aren't said. And I feel like things build up over time. And with my family living in Chicago and I live wherever I happen to be living, I feel like sometimes things don't always get said that need to be said.

So, it wasn't pleasant to have a fight between... it was between myself and my siblings, two of my siblings. But in the end, it was really good, because we stuck with it, we talked it through and it involved the younger generation and talking about, you know, issues of respect and, because here's the thing, we are moving into this, like I feel like, what is it, the Star Trek enterprise boldly go where no man has gone before.

Although, I guess everybody has gone before, because if they have kids, their kids become teenagers, their teenagers become grownups, and then, you know, you have different kinds of relationships. So, for us, having over time, our kids are now teenagers, pretty much all my sisters, and my brother, the one that was there, we all have teenagers.

And this is really... for our family, it's uncharted territory. Just having to figure our way through the changes in our children, you know, they go from being these cute little things that are fully dependent on us to these very strong, independent, have their own opinions about things, kind of people.

And you know, it's not just that the teenagers have growing pains, physically growing pains, but there are growing pains for us as the adults who love them. Right? And so, that's what the fight was about, just somebody felt slighted and it led to some high emotions. And then, one of us was going to leave and gratefully decided to stick it out and really stay the course and talk it through and talk through all the various emotions and try to discuss, like, how the changes of our kids becoming teenagers and, you know, with the teenagers, like this was a conversation with the teenagers.

Like, we may miss the mark, we may still think of you as little kids and we're used to telling you what to do and how to be or whatever, and having to make that shift to acknowledge them as almost out of the house in just a few years, kind of people. It's not easy, and I know for myself that I am constantly trying and striving to improve communication. I feel like that's my purpose in life, is communicating and communication, or my passion at least. And so, if I can't improve communication with the people I love the most, then what good is communicating with strangers? Right?

So, I will say that even though it wasn't, you know, the Norman Rockwell picture of family gathering, I am really grateful I went. I'm really grateful that we had that situation, because I feel like we're way stronger because of it. And I'll tell you about the last day we were there, which was super fun in a minute, but let me wrap that part up to say we had... the immediate family, siblings and, and parents get together, that was Sunday. And then Monday was Christmas Eve.

Well, Christmas Eve is a big deal for the Hispanic side of the family, the Puerto Rican side. My dad is from Puerto Rico, as you probably know, and his extended family, his nieces, and nephews, and brothers, and some of them, the ones that don't live in Puerto Rico, a lot of them live in downtown

Chicago in various areas of Chicago. And so, my cousin, Mary, had a get together at her house on Christmas Eve. They basically have a birthday party for Jesus. And so, we went and it was really nice to see my cousins, really nice to see my cousins. One of my cousins who had moved to Colorado recently was there and I had a great talk with her and it just was really nice to be with the family.

I love, love, love going to these family get togethers and I wasn't sure how it was going to go, but I have been craving so you know earlier this year, if you've listened for any length of time. We went to Puerto Rico and had my daughter's bat mitzvah on the island, and ever since then, well even before that, I have wanted to have to go to Puerto Rico for three Kings Day, which is in the first week in January because they have this wonderful thing, tradition called a parranda.

And a parranda is basically a musical party where you start at one house and you bring your instruments and then you sing through... you walk through the village, basically, from house to house until you have a big gathering and then you stop at someone's house and have a big party. So, I really wanted to do that, and I wanted to go this year to Puerto Rico for that. More and more, it's not looking like it's going to happen. And I was feeling really sad about that. It was just, Nathan's got clinicals and the flights are really expensive, and then two weeks after, no, actually a week and a half after that is Ahava's first Texas meet, which she's been working so hard to train and really can't miss any time to slip away to Puerto Rico.

So, I was feeling sad that that wasn't going to happen and I was so happy to find out that once I went to my cousin Maria's house, they just suddenly broke out the instruments, the guiro, the maracas, the cuatro, and the drums. And they started singing and it was just awesome. It was super fun. But it was just so fun and it was super fun because my cousins were a part of it, my son and daughters were playing music and participating, even though they don't know how, they just felt the rhythm and felt the music take over. And I just loved it.

And my dad was there teaching Samuel how to use the guiro, which is, I don't know if you know what that is, but it's like a gourd, kind of like a squash shaped thing, but hardened. And then it's got like little lines etched in it. And you use this like wire whisk looking thing to make music and it like... that's the sound it makes. So, Samuel was learning to do that and we just had a great time. So, that was the fourth party.

And then the final, final thing was, well, there was Christmas Day and surprisingly Santa Claus came to visit us at my mom's house. And so, my kids got Hanukkah and Santa Claus. So, that was kind of fun for them. And then, the last day was a day I was going to spend with my one sister, Rebecca, who I hadn't seen that much other than the family get together. So, she got some passes for theater in downtown Chicago. They have this program called TAP, which is Teen Arts Pass, I think it's called, which was really neat.

They get to see like Broadway style plays at the theater for \$5 and they get to bring a companion with them. So, we had a whole, I think it was 12 of us that went to go see a Christmas Carol and it was an amazing performance and we had a great time. So, we did that and we went around downtown Chicago to Millennium Park and had a really nice time until somebody stole my sister's purse, and that was awful.

And she had to spend the rest of my time in Chicago, basically, going to the bank and trying to get accounts closed and transferred and all of that. So, that was a bummer of an end to it, but it was an overall great trip. And I was really glad that I spent the time with my family, because sometimes when you're traveling as much as our family has in the past couple years, you don't have the time to shore up those connections and really just have the day-to-day normal conversations that you have when you live in the same neighborhood and see the same people day in, day out.

So, I feel like that was a really good trip and now I'm on my way to pick up Nala. She was staying with a trainer who, so back when we first got Nala, and she was a puppy, she was trained by my high school friend of mine, Betsy Alvarez, who is a dog trainer for Lorenzo trainers or something like that. And they have a trainer here in the Austin area.

So, I had reached out to Betsy and said, "Nala is being a brat. She has gotten very loose on her training and has decided to start ignoring a lot of the commands. And so, she needs a refresher."

She just needs to, like, when I'm taking her for a walk, she's pulling all the time. If I say heel, she just kind of comes and looks at me and does a little circle near me, but doesn't actually heel. If I tell her to sit and stay, she'll sit and stay if she feels like it, but when she feels like getting up, she gets up. And then she has this really, really, really annoying, horrible habit that she's picked up of like yelping and screaming. It literally sounds like screaming when she sees people or when I get her leash to take her outside. She just does this really horrible noise and I know it's because she's excited. But it needs to stop because she also jumps up on people, which as a German shepherd, she cannot do that. That's dangerous.

So, all of this to say that Nala, while I was in Chicago has been staying with a dog trainer who we found through her original trainer who lives in Florida. So, I'm eager to see how little Miss Nala is doing and if she picked up, if she's back to her better training, better habits, or if she's going to need, I mean, the theory is she's going to still need like three more lessons where the trainer comes to our house and works with us. But we'll see. We'll see how that all plays out.

So, I'm going to go check. I have a toll to go through here and I need to check and make sure I know where I'm going. So, standby and I will be right back.

Well, I thought I was going to go pay the toll, but this is one of those horribly obnoxious, automatically pay-by-mail and it's more expensive toll roads. And so, in order to take this road, you basically consent to having them take your picture and take the picture of the license, and then they mail you a bill for the toll.

So yes, I'm not a big fan of that, because now it's, and they say there's like an extra fee of like a \$1.90 or something like that, I think. Oh, no, no, a \$1.15 extra so that they can mail you the bill instead of actually hiring someone to work at the toll plaza. So, I hate that. I really, really, really hate that.

But I digress. So, let me go back and just say that now I'm back in Austin. I'm going to get Nala, and while I'm driving I wanted to just kind of chat with you about what's next. And I just don't know. I usually feel like I have a pretty good idea what I want and where I want to be next, but I seriously, seriously have not a clue.

The fact that Nathan just suggested that maybe we would go live in Canada for a year, and I said that I would consider it, because if you know me at all, you know I hate cold. And that sounds horrible, really,

if you think about living in Canada, that I must have lost my mind, because like in what reality would I be saying yes to the possibility of living in Canada.

And, oh, pause, on a side note, I'm looking at birds on the telephone lines and it literally looks like that movie, *The Birds*. There are swarms of blackbird, swarms and swarms of birds that I just passed through. So, that was weird. The sunset is gorgeous here in the Austin area. And I do like it here. It's chilly right now, but in general it's like, right now it says it's 48 degrees outside.

So I don't know. It's chilly. It's not snow covered like our property in New Mexico. So, yeah. Let me just backpedal and just talk it through since you guys are my sounding board, because really all this podcast is, is Rosa Linda's ramblings, as you know by now. Or if you're still listening and you're just thinking how annoying I am, I just don't get that. I am annoying. I know that. I'm human, so we're all annoying in our own way. This is my forum, this is where I vent and share my thoughts. So, I hope that you enjoy it, and if you do, keep listening and if you don't, you know, good luck. Take care. Please don't feel obligated to listen.

But anyway, so to share my ramblings, here's what, like if I logically think about what the possible scenarios are ahead for us, the first one that I really thought I wanted, and I still want, but I don't know if I have the energy to push enough to make it happen, is to, after Ahava's gymnastics season is over, so she basically starts in two weeks or, yeah, like it basically two weeks from now.

Actually, I think exactly two weeks from tomorrow, she will have her first meet. After that, she's got two months of meet, I think, until the end of March. Then once she's done with her state meet, we could potentially stay and she could do more, like if she makes it, she would go to regionals, which could be, they travel all over, not just Texas, they go to Kansas and all kinds of other places. But that's if we were deciding to stay. But for now, I'm saying that we know she's going to be here at least through the end of March. So, that's one possibility. We stay to the end of March, and then I had hoped to go to...

Oh, yep, I'm going through another toll. So far, I think I've spent \$5 in the time that I'm talking to you just to have my tag by mail. My toll bill mailed to me. But I digress. Can you tell it's a pet peeve. So, anyway, so we have that possibility and I wanted, after her state meet, I wanted to fly to Germany because my brother's in Germany and you know, kind of tour the area with them while they were on their spring break because they have four kids.

And then after that go find some like HomeAway rentals for a month at a time and go to stay, you know, like go to England for a month, go to France for a month, go to Spain for a month, whatever, you know, Ireland for a month. And so, that's what I envisioned doing full-time traveling, but not the way we've done it where you go for a couple days to one place, then a couple days to another. I want to go, and stay, and experience a place for a month and then, go to the next place and so on, and so on.

But the more I try to push that forward, the more I see that my sweetheart is not on board with that. He has not gotten excited about that possibility in any way. I could do it just with the kids and I might, but do I want to? Do I really want to be away from Nathan all that time? So, because he's still fully entrenched in his work and so I don't know. So, that's one scenario. Scenario one is do a full-time traveling in Europe for maybe six months, at least right after March.

Scenario two, actually, was just to stay here in Texas, in Round Rock area. Ahava loves her gym, so that's one. Nathan is doing a job project that he is, they really like him and he really likes them, and it seems to be working for him with a company here in Georgetown.

We actually love, love, love our neighborhood our neighbors are so wonderful. And it's a little cul-de-sac and I love having sidewalks that we, you know, can skate on, walk Samuel to school and all of that. So, there's a lot that I really like about it and a lot that I haven't explored about the Austin area. And we like it so much that we even put an offer on a house a couple weeks ago in our neighborhood, because it came available unexpectedly and it was listed for under market value and we needed some work, but we thought, okay, we could buy this house and have it for as long as we decided to stay, it could be a house that we lived in, and then from when we decided to leave, we could rent it out like a HomeAway kind of house.

Well, the offer that we put in wasn't accepted. We were only a couple thousand dollars apart from the guy, but I don't know, it just wasn't working out and it didn't seem, you know how like sometimes things are like, yes, this is supposed to happen, this is meant to be. I think all of us felt like this would be really cool if it happened. Not all of us, by the way, Ziva does not want to live in Texas. Let me be clear from the beginning about that.

Samuel's happy with his school, Ahava's happy with her gym, Ziva doesn't really have anything here that sparks joy for her. So, with that in mind, you know, this is part of why I struggle, because it's not like any one place will make everyone happy. So, that scenario two is even if that house didn't work out, continue to look for something else and stay here in the Austin area.

We have a lease at the house that we're renting, which, by the way, we're renting a house and we're renting the furniture. So, it's not like we are entrenched here, but the house we're renting is up. I guess the lease goes through the end of June, so it's the end of December right now. So, you know, we have six months still that we could stay in that house without having to do anything.

So, that's scenario two, just stay, find another place, decide to stay, make this our home. But you know, I don't know that I want that, and I know Ziva doesn't want that. And more and more, even Nathan who was at first in favor of the idea seems to be kind of chilling, like, you know, not feeling as excited about the possibility as he seemed to initially. So, that is scenario two that we're mulling over.

Scenario number three is to use these months that we're here in Austin to simultaneously prepare our house in New Mexico for our return, because right now we have somebody renting our house and it's the same family that rented it after we left New Mexico. They rented it while we lived on the boat, and they've been there now for two years and they like it, but at one point there was a possibility that they were going to buy the house.

Not all of us agreed with that, and it turned out it's just not going to happen anyway, they're not going to buy the house, so it's our house still, and we could potentially fix it up, make it a place where we could live, or fix it up to become like a HomeAway rental as well. It's on 75 acres. It's a unique property. And so, that is kind of a place that we could probably rent as a specialty place on HomeAway, or VRBO, or whatever one of those services is.

So, that's scenario three. Fix up the New Mexico house and 3A is fix it up to use like a home rental house. And 3B is fix it up for us to move back into it and live there.

And then there's, I guess, a few other possibilities. We still have the house in Tucson, which was Nathan's parents' house and he owns with his two other brothers. And we have a family that we really like that lives there. But my brother-in-law, Ari, lives in Tucson, and we do love Tucson and it's warm, which I like. So, that's another scenario. Scenario four is we could decide to move into that house. So, let's see, that's four scenarios.

Then there's the fifth scenario, which is we could move to Canada and just pursue, and now what that is, and I'm not sure I'm ready to talk about what the opportunity is quite yet, but basically, Nathan is being asked to work in a relatively new industry as a medical consultant, let's just say it's an herbal product that they need some consultants on, and I'm going to have to pause, because the person who is bringing me Nala is calling me and I need to be able to answer the phone. So, please stand by.

Okay, I am back, and that was, Reiner is her name, and she's the one that's having Nala, training her, and I'm just running late, so she was just calling to make sure I'm still coming, which I am. I'm moving very quickly because here in Texas the speed limit pretty much everywhere that I've seen is 80 miles an hour, so that's crazy. I often feel like the roads are not built for 80 miles an hour and the way people drive scares the heck out of me, but I'm getting there.

So, I was just noticing a sign said it's 88 miles from here to San Antonio, which is another place I need to explore. So, that is another argument for scenario three or four, which I can't remember which one was just staying here. I think that might have been two. See how my brain is, like, trying to even just keep track of my options is very confusing. Yeah, so I don't know. I don't know what I want to do.

Canada, the main reason Canada would be good is because I do feel like I've kind of robbed my kid of a skillset that Nathan is incredibly good at, and that is skiing. When I met him, he was an amazing skier. I'm sure he still is. I do not like skiing at all. I do not like snowboarding at all. I have tried it for years and years and years, and I end up just sitting on the side of the mountain crying. I do not like to throw my body down a mountain. Nathan would always say, "Oh, speed is your friend. You got to go faster."

And I'm like, "No, I like my body intact." And anyway, so Canada, the argument for being in Canada is, would definitely be to let my kids learn how to ski while they are young. And that is actually something we could do in New Mexico too, because right now, well it is, it says 50 degrees here right now. It is very cold and there is, I don't know, they said like 19 inches fell overnight at our house in New Mexico. My friends are all posting pictures of their like kids that are like Samuel's age completely covered in snow. Snow over their heads. And that's what's going on at our house right now.

Oh, and meanwhile I'm going over a gorgeous river. I don't know which river it is, but yeah, so it's beautiful here and that's another argument for staying here. So, yeah, I don't know. We'll see. You can see how wishy washy I am on it all. I feel like I'm waiting for an epiphany. I'm waiting for something that just makes it clear about what I should be doing. I struggle because Ahava says she wants to go to a high school next year, an actual high school.

Ziva here doesn't really have friends, doesn't want to make friends. She wants to be, by the way, I don't think I said this, but I've said it in the past, she wants to be back in New Mexico. That's her vote. She wants to be back at our house in New Mexico where some of her best friends live, and that's why she doesn't want to like it here.

And Samuel just, he loves his school. I think he'd be happy probably in most places, as long as he had access to some friends and social possibilities. But I don't know what I want. Another possibility was to go back to The Bahamas. I don't know that it's a possibility to live there unless some major things change right now financially, but the people that own Kavali House, which it's a place owned by a guy that Nathan helped medically when we were living the Dawn Treader. He got in touch with Nathan recently and said we could come and visit and stay anytime we want. And so, I'm like, "Let's go. Let's go to The Bahamas."

And of course, I always want to go to Puerto Rico, so that's another possibility. So, yeah. So, how much of that is just traveling for vacation, how much of that is traveling full-time as like learning and living and experiencing as locals kind of thing. And I don't know. I don't know the answer to that. I do know that I want to keep learning and growing and making those connections that help challenge me and allow me to become a better person, a better parent, a better overall me.

I guess if I focus on that then the rest will become clear as it is supposed to. I hope as you are making your resolutions or moving into your goal setting workshops or whatever you're doing with your time to move and look forward to the future, I hope you have clarity, probably more clarity than I do right now, and I hope you have a prosperous, amazing New Year and that some amazing, wonderful things come your way in the coming months and years.

All right. Well, that's enough for me. I'm going to look at my directions and I'm going to say goodbye. Thank you for listening to New Mexi-Castaways. I'm Rosa Linda Román.