

Hello and welcome to New Mexico Castaways. I'm Rosa Linda Román, and I am talking to you from Round Rock, Texas, which is a suburb of Austin. And this is a place that we came and moved to, came to and moved to after we moved off of our sailing catamaran, the Dawn Treader when we sold her. And this was going to begin the new chapter of our lives, which was very much focused on my husband, Nathan's work and my daughter Ahava's gymnastics aspirations.

And it's been an interesting ride. We certainly have enjoyed this area. Last night was a perfect example of what we enjoy about it here. My daughter, Ahava's 14th birthday is today, and we live in a neighborhood, a cul-de-sac that is the nicest group of people in any neighborhood I've ever been a part of.

They quickly joined, I set up like a little neighborhood party and even though it was super freezing last night, we set up like a fire pit and we had this really nice little gathering for Ahava's birthday. The reason we were doing it that day, instead of other days is because we were trying to accommodate and work around her gymnastics schedule because she has been training.

We moved here in August. It's now January 14th, and her first gymnastics meet was supposed to be yesterday in Dallas, her first Texas meet. She has been training and training and training like crazy. And we, earlier this week, last Tuesday, actually, today's Monday, we got a call from her coach to tell us that she hurt herself, that Ahava injured her knee a bad landing off of a flyaway, which is when you're on the bars, you do your bar routine and then kind of the way that you land is you let go and then you land and you stick the landing. That's the theory is, but in this case, she missed, and she fell, and she hurt her knee.

I am ever the optimist, and I believe in like the power of The Secret. You know, how you can manifest anything and anything is possible, and not to just negativity, breathe negativity. So, stay positive, think of the best, expect the best, believe. I mean, the premise of The Secret, which is a book all about the law of attraction is that you ask, you believe, and you receive.

So, I try not to spend a lot of energy thinking about negative things because I don't want to manifest any of that in my life. So, I will say when we got the call that she hurt herself, I stayed positive. And all the while, Nathan, my husband, who if you follow this podcast for any length of time, you know that he's a doctor, but he's an orthopedist. He's an internal medicine doctor and he was telling me that it was not good and she was going to probably need surgery and all this. And I was like, "She just probably twisted her knee. She's fine." You know? I just tried to stay positive and I think Ahava was trying to do the same.

Last Friday was it, or Thursday or Friday, she had an MRI and they didn't read the results, but they did tell Nathan basically that she did have an ACL tear and a meniscus tear, but to what degree and whether she would need surgery or not was something that we wouldn't find out until this morning. Well, we found out, and she does need surgery. Apparently, it's scheduled for the end of this month, so just like two weeks from now.

Last night, some of the people that came to her little party, our neighborhood party were her fellow teammates and they had just come back from Dallas, from their own competitions. So, one of the people that was at Ahava's little neighborhood party last night was her teammate Rebecca, who is a level eight gymnast, and who a few weeks ago injured her knee as well. Level eight is two levels above

where Ahava is competing right now or supposed to be. And the moves that these girls do are unbelievably powerful, and intense, and frankly scary as a mom to watch.

But she hurt her knee and it was hurt enough that it required surgery. And they weren't even sure if they were going to be able to repair it, and she is out for the season, which is at the time when it happened to Rebecca, I mean, it was just devastating. And I thought, "That's so awful." And she's old enough that everybody was talking and saying that they thought it was a career ending injury and that she couldn't recover from this.

And I thought it was premature to say that, but now here we are in the exact same position asking the exact same questions about my own daughter, and I'm just like, beside myself wondering, you know? So, I wasn't able to go to the appointment with them, and frankly, I think Nathan didn't really want me to, because well, A, I'm not medically inclined and really can't handle any of the gory details too well. But also, I think he just kind of wanted to handle it his way with his daughter, and he's the medical guy, so I respect that. So, I was waiting for the updates of what happened and when he called, actually, he texted, and since I'm paused, I'm on my way to go meet them, by the way, that's where I'm going, and since I'm at a stoplight, here's what he wrote.

"ACL rupture, can start working out on bars without dismount, stretching and strengthening good. No twisting, no running, biking good, no impact. Surgery, 29th." That doesn't tell me that much. But basically, I talked to him after that and he said, yes, she's going to need surgery. And I talked to Ahava, they were on speaker and I said, "So, what does this mean, like recovery time?"

And she said eight months is what they're saying, eight months. That's her whole season, all of the training that she's been doing, all of her competitions will be behind her. She will miss the entire competition season. She will miss months and months of training. And you know, like how do you maintain the level that she's been working so hard to get back to now?

Like, I don't even know how to process that. You know, after I hung up with her and Nathan, I just started crying for her because, you know, and it's weird because people are like, "Well now you can do what you want." Because I've always kind of had like, well, you know, if it weren't for gymnastics, we could travel the world and, you know, but we can't because it's an all year sport.

And she kind of made that comment yesterday like, "Well, you know, at least maybe we could travel or whatever." I said, "No, no, no, no. This is not the way we get to do that." I said, I will travel my whole life and whether I have to wait, you know, four years or however many years till they're done with whatever, pursuing their passion might be." Of course, I'm like, "No, I don't want her hurt. I don't want them to have to give up the thing that they love." And that's what I've always struggled with because I feel like I have kind of a gypsy soul, you know? I want to explore, I want to travel, I want to see the world, but not to the detriment of my children or at their expense.

On the contrary, because I think that traveling with kids is a challenging but be tremendously rewarding. That is why I want to do it, not just because I want to see things and I care about only me. Hopefully, that is definitely not what my children think and definitely is not the truth. But here we are and you know, everything's changing. I'm on my way to meet her and Nathan, and I seriously don't even know what to say because I feel like, what do you say when somebody's put so much into something and then

to have it just taken out from under them like that. It's sickening. It makes me feel like throwing up, just thinking about it.

So, that is where we are right now. I don't know if that means we'll stay here because we moved here specifically, we stayed in Round Rock because she loves her team and she has loved gymnastics and she was making massive strides. And a lot of the stress between kind trying to find the balance between my desire to explore and travel with my family and their desire to pursue their, in Nathan's case, his career goals, and in Ahava's case, her gymnastics goals, the challenge is that I believe that she could kind of maintain a certain level of her gymnastics ability. She could still compete. She might not be the best in Texas, but she would be probably, you know, keep her status and be functionally competitive and enjoy it along the way.

And that's what we did when we lived on the boat. She worked out and she trained wherever they had a gym. So, for example, in The Bahamas, there was a gym in Nassau. And so, we would take a cab three times a week, I think it was, or maybe more, maybe it was every day from the south side of, it's not called Paradise Island. What is it called? I can't remember the island that Nassau is on.

We would take a cab across the island to go bring her to gym every day, and she would train in Nassau. When we went to Puerto Rico to have her bat mitzvah, she trained in Puerto Rico. When we would visit Chicago, she would train in Chicago. When we were in Florida, we stayed at a marina for seven months instead of sailing, so that she could train for those seven.

So, there were ways that she maintained her sport, although it wasn't to the degree that... it wasn't like at the top of her sport, but it was enough that she could hold her own and function. But she wanted more than that, and that's why we came here to the Austin area because she wanted to really see what she could do.

So, she was doing that and her coaches were like, "Wow, the difference that we see in her, the improvement is massive." And they were just floored that she has been able to do as much and make as much progress as she has in basically, well, we came here in May for a month and then we were back for another month.

So, I think it's a total of five months that she's been training with this gym. But the last four months straight. And so, you know, she's making all this great progress. They have nothing but great things to say about her. She's about to compete and show the world how awesome, you know, her skills and how awesome she is now, and then she tears her ACL. And I just sit here and I think, okay, so what does this all mean? You know, I'm not someone who, I don't believe that things just happen. I don't believe in accident. I think that we choose our destiny. I think we choose what we do in this lifetime. And with that in mind, I'm like, okay, so if that's true, then like what is the point of this? Why would she hurt herself at this stage in the game when she's got so much invested in her sport? Seriously, I don't even know where we're going to go from here, but I do know where I'm going right now is to go eat with my daughter and husband and find out what they're thinking.

So, I am going to pause this and I'll come back after lunch and let you know what was said. All right, talk to you later.

All right, so I'm back and it's several hours later. I actually just dropped Ahava off at her gym, and so I thought I would fill you in on how the rest of the day went. So, I met Ahava and Nathan for lunch, and

they filled me in on, basically, how the second appointment went. They had gone to the first orthopedic surgeon appointment and that doctor was the one that just did the surgery, I believe, the surgery on her teammate. So, came highly recommended, but at the same time, we were scrambling last week to try to get anyone, like, as quick as we could get her seen so we could see if she had any chance of competing, yesterday would've been her first competition.

So, we were scrambling. Nathan called some colleagues and they had a recommendation of someone he could call. And so, they squeezed them in there as well. So, we basically had two appointments and we decided, well, we might as well with something so serious as potentially getting surgery for our daughter, let's go ahead and just go to both appointments for a second opinion.

So, they did that and basically, her birthday morning was spent going to orthopedic surgeon appointments. And basically, both doctors said the same thing. She needs surgery. She ruptured her ACL, and she has a six to eight-month recovery ahead of her, after the surgery.

So, in other words, her whole competition season is over. She's done before it even began. So, as I'm talking to her and I look down and she's got a brace, a full leg brace on now, and it hit me and I got choked up. I got a little misty-eyed in there, you know, this is my baby. And watching her have to go through this is just torture. And you know, it's interesting because at one point during our conversation she said, "You know, I know you guys put a lot into supporting me." And I think she thought that we were upset because of all that we put into it.

And we both were like, "No, no, no, no. This is not about that. Yes, we want you to appreciate, you know, the fact that this family has made a choice to support you, and we want you to be respectful and grateful about that, but this is not about us. You know, we want to support you and help you through this because this is your dream and what you're facing."

So, you know, it was good conversations, but really heartbreaking. None of us could really think straight or talk too clearly about what is going to come next, because the fact of the matter is we have no idea what is coming next. We will get her through her surgery, and then, you know, we'll take it from there.

Nathan is basically, I think, operating under the idea that she will fight back and she will get back to her full potential, and then on the back end of this injury, you know, it's too soon to tell, but it does make me think, I would be lying if I didn't say, it makes me wonder if we should stay in Austin.

I mean, the main reason we decided to stay is because she loves her team and you know, she was making such great progress. In fact, we had even gotten to the point where we put an offer on a house in our neighborhood, because we love our little cul-de-sacs so much. Our neighbors are just so wonderful as evidenced by the fact that we had that little birthday party for Ahava last night, and it's just such a nice little place.

And so, a house a neighbor kind of across the street had put a For Sale sign in their yard and we inquired, and we decided that we would buy the house even if it was not for a long term thing, in terms of living there ourselves. At the very least, it would be an investment and we would be able to, you know, rent it out, do HomeAway or something down the road.

Oh cool, an eagle just flew in front of my car. Anyway, so we ended up putting an offer on that house thinking we were going to stay here for a while and we might as well instead of continuing to rent, have

a place while we're here. That all fell through because the people that owned it turned out they were, I don't know, they must have been having some kind of bank problems because all of a sudden we made an offer, we were within a couple thousand dollars, our offer and what they were asking, their counter offer, and then all of a sudden they just turned down our offer and took the whole thing off the market.

So, we don't know what that was all about, but I think maybe the husband wanted to sell it and the wife didn't, or who knows what goes on behind people's closed doors.

But anyway, so we didn't obviously buy that house, and honestly, we were all trying to still wrestle with whether we wanted to actually be here. That long, long term or not, and we just really don't know. But it was kind of easier feeling like, well, we're here for a purpose to support Ahava in her sport.

And you know, as long as she's feeling good about it and loving it, it's a good team, they believe in her, they're really sweet girls, you know, that are on her team with her. And so, there were so many reasons why we decided, let's do it. Nathan's job is perfectly happy having him here working on the project that is based near us.

And so, you know, it made sense. Well, now I'm going, "Well, does it make sense?" I mean, we were trying to plan, we were going to go to Europe after her state meet, which was supposed to be the end of March. We were going to go to Germany. I've been working on learning German, because my brother moved there. He's stationed in Stuttgart, Germany, which is where my grandmother is from, was from. And so, I thought we would go there and maybe spend a month in Germany, and then, go and spend a month in France, and spend a month in Spain, and like go, you know, rent a place for like a month or so we could really see each place.

And as I wanted to do that, then it just became abundantly clear that we really couldn't do that with gymnastics. It was not realistic so that she could do her training and pursue her sport the way she wanted to. So now, here we are in a situation where she really can't pursue her sport the way she she wants to and do we just go ahead and do the traveling that we talked? Or do we stay here and let her try to push through this and do physical therapy and I mean, she's going to have to do some kind of therapy anyway, but to figure out whether she can do that, wherever else we might want to go or if we should stay put in this one area.

So, that is what we are wrestling with. Obviously, it's way too soon to tell. Emotionally, it's just way too much to process. We were supposed to go to, kind of on a side note, we have been looking at this... there's this place in The Bahamas, in the Exumas that we kept our boat for a time, and I'm sure I've talked about Cavali House and it's for sale, and we loved this place, love it. But I mean, it's like crazy expensive and you know, the logical part of my brain is like, we can't afford that. But I am a big dreamer, as you can tell. And I just put it out there when I was there checking on the Dawn Treader and kind of helping the captains move aboard so that they could sail her back from The Bahamas to Florida, that was Captain Verna and Mike.

I spent some time at Cavali House and on the beach with Nala, and it was just like, it was everything that I had dreamed of in a place. Just being there and being so close to nature and having a community. You know, the Georgetown community is so wonderful, the cruisers and the locals, and, you know, there was so many things, and I remember saying, and I may have even written it in my journal, that, you know, when I'm trying to figure out what I want, this is what I want. I want more of, this is what I said.

Well, fast forward, it's, you know, I don't know, it's actually a year since Nathan actually saved the life of the owner of Cavalli House. It's very complicated. I'll have to save that story for another day. Or you can read my book, which I just wrote about this in my book which I'm finishing up the rough draft on. But that's another conversation for another day.

But anyway, long story short, Cavali House is for sale and we are actually like thinking, how could we get creative and maybe buy it and, you know, what would that look like if we were living on a tropical island? Or at the very least have a tropical island available to us, you know, whenever we wanted and have it be maybe something that we go invest in with other families, other friends of ours.

So, that has been bouncing around in my head this week, and as I'm sitting here thinking about Ahava, and her recovery, and gymnastics and what we might want for the next chapter of our lives. You know, there's a lot to consider and I really don't know what direction it will all end up going in.

But I do know I'm home. I just got home after dropping her off at gym. She's able to do some stretching and exercise strength training kind of stuff, as long as she doesn't put any weight on her leg that's injured. So, she's going to train for a few hours today and see how that goes just so that she can, because she's very strong and you know, she's highly conditioned.

And to go from that to just sitting around all day, like she's been, you know, looking at her brother's little iPad and playing, you know, like Bubble Crush or whatever those mindless games are because she doesn't know what to do with herself. So, I think it's really good that she is back at the gym today even if it's just to see her friends on her birthday. I think I'll go pick up some cupcakes and bring them when I go pick her up.

But anyway, that's what's on our mind lately. We've got a lot to consider. Some of it we really can't process right away. But hopefully, over time we'll figure out how to get her back to full health and where we want to go from here.

All right. Well, thank you guys for listening to Rosa Linda's ramblings here on New Mexi-Castaways. I hope you are well and that your loved ones are not injuring themselves and are taking care of their own health and happiness. Happy 2019 or whenever you are listening to this, I hope all is well in your world.

Thanks for listening to New Mexi-Castaways. I'm Rosa Linda Román.