

Executive Protection Story Submission Form

For the book,
"No Kidding, There I Was"
The Real-Life Stories of Executive Protection Professionals

Your Story

Please write your story below.

Title: The \$500 Steak Problem

Story:

My protectee had scheduled a dinner party for sixteen guests. Sixteen very important, very well-fed guests. As I was coordinating with other protection teams, the house informed me, the chef had called out for personal reasons and would not be cooking tonight's main course.

The estate staff could handle the sides. The main course, however, was a shipment of Wagyu steaks flown in from Japan, and nobody on the property was willing to touch them. Understandable. Nobody wants to be the guy or gal who ruins a steak that costs about as much my monthly car payment.

I had the pleasure of delivering this news to my Protectee. He looked at me, completely unbothered, and asked, "You can cook them, right?"

I have negotiated with hostile actors. I have held my composure in genuinely dangerous situations. None of that prepared me for the internal panic of hearing myself say, "Yes sir, I can."

My reasoning at the time was solid: I grill my own steaks all the time, how hard could this be? I did not know how wrong I was yet, but I was about to find out. For anyone unfamiliar with Wagyu, it is absurdly marbled with fat and cooks like it's made of lava, especially over an open flame.

Since my Protectee happened to own several award-winning restaurants, he handed me the phone number of one of his Michelin-starred chefs. I was now on the phone with a world-class chef, prepping to cook \$500-a-steak Wagyu on what was fundamentally just an upgraded backyard propane grill.

The chef's instructions were simple: salt heavily, dunk in canola oil, throw on the hot grill. What he failed to mention was that "heavily salted, oil-soaked, extremely fatty steak meets open flame" is also the recipe for a small structure fire. The first test steak went up like a tiki torch. I was still on the phone, describing the flames in real time, and clarifying, with some urgency, that I was not standing in a professional kitchen and did not have a proper oven to finish these things off. The chef laughed and told me he would not want to be me. Extremely helpful. Thank you, chef.

I adjusted the heat, adjusted my technique, then grilled all seventeen steaks. I did not take a single temperature preference. Everyone got medium rare, whether they ordered it or not. Somehow, it worked. The steaks were a hit.

In over twenty years of protection work around the world, including being shot at, being blown up, and responding to mass casualty situations, cooking those steaks remains the single most nerve-racking moment of my career.

There was a silver lining. Right before dinner, my Protectee sent me down to the wine cellar for a specific three-liter bottle of red, vintage 1934 wine and asked me to taste it first to make sure it hadn't turned to vinegar. It was, without exaggeration, the best wine I have ever had in my life, and I will almost certainly never drink anything that old again.

Lesson:

The lesson: in this job, you will be asked to do things you never trained for and never expected. As long as it's legal, you'd better be ready to say yes and figure it out. The moment you start deciding a task is "not my job," is the moment you start looking for a new one.

Aside from your story, do you have any operational tips, best practices, or "tricks of the trade" that you would recommend to other EP professionals? (please avoid providing a sales pitch for any particular products or services)

When you're traveling for weeks at a time, packing a fresh suit for every single day just isn't practical. Here's a quick wardrobe hack I picked up: mix cheap vodka and a few drops of your favorite essential oil (I go with lavender) in a travel spray bottle. Shake it up and spritz the inside of your garment. The high alcohol content in the vodka kills odor-causing bacteria and disinfects the fabric, while the oil leaves it smelling fresh.



Vodka
Miniature

2-3 Drops