



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Episode #10: More Than Five Senses

Please note: This is an unedited transcript, provided as a courtesy, and reflects the actual conversation as closely as possible. Please forgive any typographical or grammatical errors.

- Martha Beck: [Intro Music] Welcome to Bewildered. I'm Martha Beck, here with Rowan Mangan. At this crazy moment in history a lot of people are feelings bewildered, but that actually may be a sign we're on track. Human culture teaches us to come to consensus, but nature — our own true nature — helps us come to our senses. Rowan and I believe that the best way to figure it all out is by going through bewilderment into be-wild-erment. That's why we're here. [Music fades]
- Martha Beck: Hi. I am Martha Beck.
- Rowan Mangan: And I'm Rowan Mangan. This is Bewildered, the podcast for people trying to figure it out. I myself have been trying to figure it out using long division this week, which I never learned to do. So it's tricky. Anyway, Marty realized she had a calculator in her phone and figured it out in just a few seconds.
- Martha Beck: Ah yeah, actually, just between you and me, I figured out that if you poke at a calculator a few times and then proclaim something in a very confident voice, people like Ro will believe you have figured it out. I don't have a clue what she was going on about. This actually is how I make my living. I looked it up and this is what I got. I figured it out.
- Rowan Mangan: Proclaim things confidently.
- Martha Beck: Absolutely.
- Rowan Mangan: What are you actually trying to figure out, Marty Moon?
- Martha Beck: Oh, heavens. Oh, it's been a hard chapter in my life.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh yes.
- Martha Beck: Because I have been on a book tour.
- Rowan Mangan: On a book tour?



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- Martha Beck: On a book tour. And a book tour these days means a lot of Zoom things. Interviews. And people who used to do radio, they still want to see your face. They want to see your face. I don't want them to see my face. That's why I became a writer, not a facer. So I remembered that when I used to go out and about doing book tour things for reals, like I was on the Oprah show and stuff, they always put you in hair and makeup. So you come out looking ridiculous, but you're confident because they have proclaimed in a confident voice that you now look exactly like the makeup artist. You will walk out looking exactly like the makeup artist. Anyway, one thing they do is they put on you, the false eyelashes.
- Rowan Mangan: The false eyelashes?
- Martha Beck: The eyelashes of falseness, do they affix to your eyes. Well, your eyelids. That would be awkward. And then every time you look sideways, you go, "Ahh!" because it's like there's a spider on your face. Yeah. But anyway, it makes you look much better on camera. So I was ready to do my first Zoomy things. And again, because I'm a very, very lucky woman. Oprah invited me to do a thing with her. Well, the false eyelashes on Oprah are world-class. I could not countenance going on an Oprah production without false eyelashes.
- Rowan Mangan: That's very strange just from where I sit, to be preparing for an interview with Oprah in your house. In one's own bathroom.
- Martha Beck: It was very weird. Very weird.
- Rowan Mangan: So it's still your house, right? But how do you make it Oprah enough?
- Martha Beck: I know. There's no way.
- Rowan Mangan: Well, there was one way.
- Martha Beck: We tried. So I thought, okay, I remember the way the makeup artists used to spackle me and the way they affixed the eyelashes of falseness to my lids. So I thought, I can do this. I can do this. And actually, Rowan out and bought me all manner of false eyelashes.
- Rowan Mangan: I drove out into the day thinking, "We've got to Oprah-fy this woman."



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- Martha Beck: So she came back with all kinds of cosmetics, including false eyelashes and glue to put it on. And I was at home watching tutorials about how to do it. Folks, it's so simple. Just watch the tutorials. Put a little glue on the thing, make sure you put your mascara on first, because it sticks to the falsies. Then you just lay them along the lash line, tap, tap, tap. You're done. No problem. So I gave myself two hours to do it.
- Rowan Mangan: A ridiculous amount of time.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. So it's like, everything's ready. We create a fake TV studio in our spider-filled basement where Dracula is right behind the sliding door. But it looks really good on the camera, right?
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. It looked great.
- Martha Beck: Great. They thought we were in some sort of spacious thing.
- Rowan Mangan: We were not.
- Martha Beck: Two hours before it all goes down, I begin putting on the false lashes.
- Rowan Mangan: The bitter laugh of experience.
- Martha Beck: About 90 minutes in, Ro texted me to say, how are you doing?
- Rowan Mangan: And I got this text back with no punctuation that simply said, "I am in hell." From her bathroom she was texting me "I am in hell." I come in and there's just eyelashes hurled on every surface furiously. You could feel how furiously they'd been hurled. The glue everywhere. Marty was in a state.
- Martha Beck: It was a nightmare. I had one mainly glued to my eye. I guess I hadn't glued it exactly anywhere near the eyelashes. I tried to fill in the space between my fake eyelashes and my real ones by poking eyeliner in through the falsie. So I had like half an inch of eyeliner with eyelashes sitting on the top of them. And the other one simply would not stick, because I have a watery eye because of allergies. And every time I got it halfway there, it would sprong out because the tears would dissolve the glue. So I was losing my crap. I could not go on Oprah without false eyelashes.
- Rowan Mangan: The one eye looked fantastic.
- Martha Beck: A little startling, but okay.
- Rowan Mangan: It did blink a millisecond after you did.



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- Martha Beck: It had this lag effect. So Ro says, "We can do this. We can do this." So we get the glue. She said, "Just lie down flat." So I lie down flat on the bed so my tears will fall backwards instead of down my cheeks, which they were doing for reasons of allergies and grief at this point, because I was so full of shame and horror. So she said, "Shut your eye." So we painted it with as much eyeliner as the other one and then Ro got a pair of tweezers.
- Rowan Mangan: Well, first I got the glue. The eyeliner, then glue, put the glue on and got a pair of tweezers, because I was trying to find something that I could use to hold it down while the glue dried.
- Martha Beck: Tweezers are sharp.
- Rowan Mangan: I'm so sorry.
- Martha Beck: And she had to put some pressure on, because then otherwise we wouldn't have falsies for Oprah, but the whole time I'm thinking I could lose my eye right now. And she leaned in just a bit more. I was like, it's okay. It's okay.
- Rowan Mangan: And then eventually, somehow we got both eyes with sufficient eyelash.
- Martha Beck: Reasonably the same. And I tried to mop up all the glue and eyeliner off the rest of my face with Q-tips and then cover it with cover stick and whatnot.
- Rowan Mangan: So then we went down, down to the basement of Oprah.
- Martha Beck: Into the basement with Dracula and the spiders. We turned on a million lights and got me on camera. And Oprah is so gracious and kind and wonderful.
- Rowan Mangan: And probably not putting on her own false eyelashes, let's be honest.
- Martha Beck: It must be said. I'm sure she did it back in the day, but that was a while ago.
- Rowan Mangan: She looked fabulous. [crosstalk 00:07:24]
- Martha Beck: She looked amazing. Anyway, halfway through, unbeknownst to me, they started texting Ro.



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Rowan Mangan: I started getting texts from the producers. And what they were actually asking me to do was to intervene and fix a smudge that they thought they could see near Martha's eye. But you have to understand, Oprah was talking in my house. She wasn't there, but she was talking there and she was talking to Marty and it was a lot of pressure for me to sit there in the dark and, and let it take place. Then they start telling me, just interrupt Oprah.

I'm like, hahaha. I'm not interrupting Oprah. For nothing. And they're like, "No. Martha has a smudge on her face."

Martha Beck: It's a wound, people. It's a wound.

Rowan Mangan: I was like, look, I can try, but she's going to have to give me a very long pause before I'm going to interrupt Oprah for a smudge. The smudge in the scheme of things in how badly this could have gone. It's nothing.

Martha Beck: It was nothing. It was truly if they had known.

Rowan Mangan: If they had any idea. Oprah would have just kicked you if she knew how bad you almost did.

Martha Beck: We want no one to read your book. You have a wounded eye.

So anyway, I've been doing more interviews and every now and then I try to put on the falsies, and I'm getting somewhat better at it. It's a little bit less like I'm wrestling a crocodile in there when I'm putting on the falsies.

Rowan Mangan: One evening she was due to be interviewed by someone she's very excited about, and we determined that this was a false eyelash worthy interview.

Martha Beck: Yes. He was the main hostage negotiator for the FBI. And he was interested in my book. I write self-help and like chick lit and stuff, and he's this very fancy FBI agent. So I read his book, which is amazing.

Rowan Mangan: She read it like three times, started trying-

Martha Beck: How to interrogate hostages. I'm like, "This is mentally wonderful."

Rowan Mangan: And then she started trying to use the techniques on us in the house. She was negotiating things.



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- Martha Beck: It was true. They'd be like, "Oh wait, do we have any bagels?" And I'd say, "How can I give you a bagel until I know what you're going to do with it? What – define bagel?" Yeah, these are the techniques. Anyway, I get my false eyelashes on and it only took like an hour.
- Rowan Mangan: And down she goes. We had family things happening, so I couldn't go down and lurk in the darkness with her for this one. So I heard no more. She descended for an hour and then she walked back up the stairs, eyelashes first, coming around the corner. They're just flapping in the wind.
- Martha Beck: Eyelashes that enter the room half a second before I do.
- Rowan Mangan: That's right. It was amazing. Damn, you looked good that night, Marty.
- Martha Beck: Thank you. Anything for the FBI.
- Rowan Mangan: So I said, "How did it go? How did it go?" And Marty goes, "It went well." With that tone of voice. "It went well."
- Martha Beck: Considering it was a man in his mother's garage, in a small town in the country somewhere. It was a different person of the same name.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. It was not hostage guy. It was a guy who, in his bio, it turned out, which we hadn't closely examined, said that he likes to review restaurants from his small town and rant about traffic.
- Martha Beck: And rant about traffic.
- Rowan Mangan: And he managed to land Martha Beck.
- Martha Beck: We ranted about traffic till the cows came home. Oh, how we laughed.
- Rowan Mangan: It would have been ironic if you ended up having to use FBI guy's techniques against, or with, the other dude with the same name who ended up being your interviewer. And we still haven't heard from FBI hostage negotiator.
- Martha Beck: We still haven't heard from the FBI guy. I kept checking to make sure it wasn't really he, my FBI hero.
- Okay. So Ro.
- Rowan Mangan: Yes.



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- Martha Beck: What are you actually trying to figure out, besides how to interrupt Oprah and wipe a wound from my face?
- Rowan Mangan: I don't think I'll ever get over that feeling of being told to interrupt Oprah. I'm like, "You interrupt Oprah." Jesus.
- Martha Beck: "You're right there with her." And they're like, "That's why we can't do it."
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. Yeah. I never interrupted her. I didn't need to.
- Martha Beck: It was okay.
- Rowan Mangan: It was fine. What am I trying to figure out? One of the things that I have really in all seriousness been trying to figure out lately... Well, let me backtrack. When you're a foreign person in a foreign land, one of the things that occasionally happens from time to time, especially when you need to communicate with people on the telephone, is that you get on the phone with the DMV or whatever. They can't understand a dang word you say.
- Martha Beck: What? Sorry. Say that again.
- Rowan Mangan: And it's unpleasant. It's uncomfortable. And so I thought, I don't want to talk American if I can get away with not, but I'd like to have a decent, comprehensible accent in my back pocket for those moments. Ordering takeout. That's another one. I mean, God help me if I even use my own language and call it takeaway, like it's really called.
- Martha Beck: What? You've lost me. Go back.
- Rowan Mangan: I know. So I have been trying to figure out how to do an American accent, and for anyone out there who's not American and has ever tried this, one of the... North American, I should say, because I think the Canadians do similar. One of the most difficult sounds to make, if you come from my part of the world is the American r sound.
- Martha Beck: Well done.
- Rowan Mangan: Thank you. Because for us, I will acknowledge that in my own accent, now that I've looked deeply into it, we don't really say r as r, we say it as "ah".



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Martha Beck: When I meet people [crosstalk 00:13:42] when Ro has introduced me, they say, "So it's nice to meet you... Mattie?" We have a dog named Bilbo, Ro's dog Bilbo. We took him to this store, and the checker said, "What's his name?" And Ro said, "Bilbo".

Rowan Mangan: I didn't. I said, "Bilbo" like a normal human being.

Martha Beck: And she said, "Hello, Bill Bay." "No, Bilbo."

Rowan Mangan: So then I tried to learn how to say Bilbo, but that's not even it. The thing is-

Martha Beck: That's really good, that's much better than you used to do it.

Rowan Mangan: Of the things that you don't realize is that you've never... All right. I'll own it. One of the things I realized is that I've never heard a proper American accent spoken in my voice. So I don't know how much my voice will change when I'm doing it, right? It's a really weird thing to admit. So I started watching YouTube videos about how to do an American accent, to the hilarity of Marty and Karen who were hanging out there.

Martha Beck: We're part of the dominant culture and then feel absolutely free to-

Rowan Mangan: Mock and ridicule.

Martha Beck: Yeah. It's like bear baiting.

Rowan Mangan: I actually did have to tell you quite forcefully to shut the you know what up, didn't I?

Martha Beck: Cried my false eyelashes [crosstalk 00:14:59]. It was terrible.

Rowan Mangan: You weren't actually saying anything, it's just that your eyelashes were flapping noisily.

Martha Beck: Tell them about the spoon. The tiny spoon.

Rowan Mangan: Okay. If you want to make an American r sound, what you need to do is make your little tongue the shape in your mouth of a little teaspoon. I hope there is not one person listening to this right now who's not trying to make a spoon shape out of their tongue. And now I can say Marty. Marty. Marty.

Martha Beck: Yeah. And there was the YouTube person who had you say "Ruff ruff." You got it going.



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Rowan Mangan: It's funny, the things they can make you do.

Martha Beck: So then she can say ruff, but she can't say my name without going, "Maruffty."

Rowan Mangan: I've been practicing and practicing, which usually sounds like this around the house. "Marty." "Yes?" "Marty." "Yes?" "Marty." "Yes?"

Martha Beck: No, no. Marty. Ruff.

Rowan Mangan: That's just Bilbo joining you.

Martha Beck: I hope you never figure that out really, because I love having an Aussie around and I love Australian accents.

Rowan Mangan: Thank you. Well, maybe there's a happy medium.

Martha Beck: Somewhere there's a happy medium, which kind of brings us to our topic of what we really want to talk about today.

Rowan Mangan: Extraordinarily, because it's quite a big leap to get there from here.

Martha Beck: The happy medium.

Rowan Mangan: We've been talking recently, Marty, about the process of coming back out into the world after a year and some. Nearly a year and a half for some of us. With lock downs and quarantine and all the sort of stuff that's happened in the last-

Martha Beck: Pandemic stuff.



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- Rowan Mangan: Pandemic stuff, you could say, come under that umbrella. And the way that it is a coming out in the other sense as well for many of us who have had a year outside of society. We talked about this in our last episode, actually, about... Your weirdness can start to poke through a bit more. I was thinking about it as coming out, because I was listening to this really great nonbinary person on Instagram called Jeffrey Marsh, who was talking about the ways that the pandemic year have affected people's gender and their attitude towards the gender binary. And what they were saying was that the use of they/them pronouns is actually really, really, really increasing as people get to spend this time at home and they're not having to go outside the house and perform their gender in society day after day and it doesn't get reinforced in that way, the role. I thought that was really interesting. So there's coming out as COVID ends can mean coming out of your house and it can mean introducing yourself with the identity that you've been able to access.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. Because there's so many things we perform culturally. Gender being a very, very intense and ubiquitous one. But think of all the things we didn't have to perform as much, and that in this breakdown that we do between culture and nature, with less culture, it allowed people's natures to rise up more, and we're less performative about everything. And then when you think about going back out into the world, the idea of having to perform again can loom up. And if you decide you're not going to go out and perform whatever aspect of your culture you're going to confront, if you're not going to perform, you're going to have to come out as who you really are.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. Yeah. And I think there's a lot of people confronting that decision right now, and lots of different ways that people are coming out. And not just people. As we record this, Marty, there's another kind of coming out.
- Martha Beck: That's true. That's true. After 17 long years, the cicadas of the Northeastern American continent are... They have been chewing tree roots for 17 years as little nymphs. When I read the word nymph in Greek mythology, I didn't think of it as a disgusting little larva, but they'd been nymphing away for 17 years.
- Rowan Mangan: Nymphos.
- Martha Beck: And then once every 17 years they come out, they shed their carapaces. They come out as cicadas. Cicadas. Yes. Full fledged, with red eyes. I was afraid they were going to eat everything, because we read that there would be hundreds of billions coming out of the ground right about now.



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Rowan Mangan: And there are in places. I can see them. I can see them on my screens, my devices. I see those cicadas, but I don't see them out the window.

Martha Beck: We haven't had them per se right in our exact location. They could still come. Anyway, I was afraid they would eat everything, all the leaves and plants and whatnot. But no, they don't eat after they come out. After their 17 years of maturation, they come out, they blossom into sexual maturity and they don't even eat. What they do is, they climb to the tops of trees and they scream and then they have sex and die.

Rowan Mangan: So basically just like all the rest of us.

Martha Beck: Yes. Exactly. Okay. It's very precarious for me now out on the ends of the limbs.

Rowan Mangan: Especially with those eyelashes.

Martha Beck: Right, the wind [crosstalk 00:20:32].

Rowan Mangan: They could unbalance you.

Martha Beck: But I could maybe fly. I have Cicada wings on my eyes.

But I was thinking... Because they're not sexual until they end the nymph stage and they leave their carapace behind, and then they're-

Rowan Mangan: I'll say. I'm sorry.

Martha Beck: And I guess they're screaming with sexual desire or something, because people say that in areas where they're really common, the noise is so deafening you have to wear earplugs, people go deaf, almost, listening to them. Anyway, I was thinking, what if you were a gay cicada? You would be chomping away, no sexual organs, no sexual maturity. One is to assume no sexual inclinations per se, again, and then you come out, you shed your carapace, you climb to the top of a tree and you realize you want to scream to female to female, male to male. You would have to come out after coming out.

Rowan Mangan: If you only had screaming as your method of delivery of your coming out. "Mom! Dad! I'm gay!"

Martha Beck: We should do that, Ro. Just climb up to the top of a tree.

Rowan Mangan: It's a bit light. I think people have got our number on that score.



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- Martha Beck: Sway in the winds, screaming "I'm gay!" That would be one way reconcile the issue once and for all.
- Rowan Mangan: Quite right. So we've still not got to what this podcast is about. Although you must have all kinds of brilliant ideas from where we have traveled. But it's funny, because what we want to talk about is actually in some ways more taboo in parts of our society than coming out as gay or even trans would be.
- Martha Beck: You could call it coming out as a mystic.
- Rowan Mangan: A mystic. Right. And what we're sort of talking about, what even now we're dancing around, which just shows that we're so aware of this taboo. We're talking about magic. Let's just say it. Magic.
- Martha Beck: And experience of the world that includes the miraculous, the magical, the inexplicable by rational means...
- Rowan Mangan: The mystery. We're talking about the mystery and a kind of worldview that can accommodate mysteries.
- Martha Beck: Also, if you look it up in the dictionary, it's about somebody who really wants to turn inward or toward the mystery, in whatever way that is, and is seeking to commune with it, unite with it, understand it. There are all these weird religious overtones in our culture, and then there's sort of the materialist "we don't believe any of that." And so it's a really difficult, marshy topic if you want to be a mystic in the modern world.
- Rowan Mangan: And it occurs to me that Jeffrey Marsh's description of how people come to want to use they/them pronouns, it really works as an analogy, because what they, Jeffrey was saying was that it's not gender that you come to have a problematic relationship with. It's the gender binary that can become complicated for people. And it's the binary of the this or. For me, that rings really true when it comes to the mystic word, or at least how we're defining it today, is that our culture... Again, segments of our culture can class a belief in science as one option, as one paradigm, and a belief in what we're with a bit of discomfort calling magic as another, and it's either/or, it's a binary. So you can't hold both at the same time. Do you think that's fair, Martha Beck? Sorry, just stop for one second. Martha Beck.
- Martha Beck: Your tongue is so spoon shaped right now.
- Rowan Mangan: You have no idea.



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- Martha Beck: No, it's really true, because you get lumped into you'll believe everything, like a child, versus you believe nothing like a hardcore materialist. And there's something else going on there. That's why they call it the mystery. I want to tell a story. Can I tell a quick story?
- Rowan Mangan: Is it a coming out as a mystic story?
- Martha Beck: Kind of, because I did this in my last book and whenever I write about magic or miracles in my books, New York editors get a little queasy, right?
- Rowan Mangan: Hi.
- Martha Beck: So I wrote whole section... Hi guys... That was really about magic and miracles and strangeness. And they were like, tap the brakes. So I pulled it back, but I still told this story. I have a weird relationship with wild animals. Sometimes I want to see them, and I can feel myself calling them and I can feel them reacting. It's like a piece of my own body. It's like feeling something with my hand or my foot, but a long way away. So one of the stories I told was I went to Sedona to do an interview when I was living in California, and I'm driving into Sedona late at night, and I'm interviewing someone and leaving first thing the next morning. But as we drove in the dark through Sedona, I thought I have seen the tracks here of a javelina. Javelinas are little wild pig-like animals that exist in the Arizona deserts, and I love them. And I thought, I really want to see one. But it was dark night, and I was going to be out of there first thing in the morning. So I thought, well, that's not going to happen. But I felt them. And then... You were there.
- Rowan Mangan: Damn straight I was.
- Martha Beck: So we go into this hotel suite the next day. It's on the ground floor. It's a vast place. There are a lot of hotel rooms in this spa.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, it's like a resort with little self-contained house type structures.
- Martha Beck: And we're getting all set for our interviews and we're getting our microphones on, and there's a knock at the door. Do I lie?
- Rowan Mangan: You don't, no. I was there.
- Martha Beck: I do not lie. There was a knock, and a camera assistant went to get the door. And she said, "It's a pig." Which is not what you hear every single time you go to do a televised interview. So we rushed over, thinking it would be a farm pig, but it was not.



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Rowan Mangan: Or maybe a drawing of a pig. I didn't have my sights set very high.

Martha Beck: Or a police officer.

Rowan Mangan: Sorry. Sorry for that slur against...

Martha Beck: So this peccary... Sorry. It's a javelina. They're also called peccaries, that's the species, genus, whatever. Anyway, it's standing there.

Rowan Mangan: Such a square.

Martha Beck: It knocked upon the door and there it was, and I thought it would run off into the brush, because I've seen them, but always running into the brush.

Rowan Mangan: You see their behind with their little curly tails going boing boing boing boing like a false eyelash of the behind.

Martha Beck: Stop with the eyelashes. You mock my shame.

Anyway, it just stayed there. So after a while someone cautiously opened the door and it didn't leave, and it kind of walked over, and we were close enough to if I jumped, I could have grabbed it, right?

Rowan Mangan: I love that that's how you mention the distance. It's very you.

Martha Beck: Don't think I wasn't thinking about it.

Rowan Mangan: I know you were, that's why it's so cute.

Martha Beck: But the hotel assistant was standing there going "They're very aggressive. They're very aggressive." In this thing is like, "Hello." And then out of the desert came more freaking javelinas than I have ever seen even pictures of.

Rowan Mangan: There was a whole country's worth of javelinas.

Martha Beck: The technical word is, it was a sounder. It was a sounder.

Rowan Mangan: You're such a square.

Martha Beck: [crosstalk 00:28:31]. Yes. I've been known to be square. But do I lie? There were females nursing their little piglets [crosstalk 00:28:38].



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Rowan Mangan: Oh my God. They were really cute.

Martha Beck: There were several different males that were [inaudible 00:28:43]. It was like a Mormon family reunion of javelinas. Thousands. Well. Dozens of javelinas, and they just munched and ate and nursed their babies, and then they politely turned. We had to go do the interview. This is not the only experience that I've had with wild animals that is this strange. And there were a lot of rooms on that property. And I even went and asked.

Rowan Mangan: And let's not forget, the pig knocked on the door. Let's not just rush past that part of it. How does a pig knock on a door?

Martha Beck: I heard about a pig named Russell, who he belonged to my veterinarian...

Rowan Mangan: This is such a lie. It's just like, "A pig named Russell." I don't believe a word of it.

Martha Beck: My veterinarian told me about him. And she said, pigs are so smart that if you punish them...

Rowan Mangan: [inaudible 00:29:40] veterinarian.

Martha Beck: She would punish him by making him go to timeout in his bedroom. Russell had his own room.

Rowan Mangan: Oh boy.

Martha Beck: She was a veterinarian. Okay.

Rowan Mangan: Was this a dream?

Martha Beck: No. I said in Australian. But Russell, when he was punished for something he felt was unjust, he would go into his room, turn around, slam the door shut with his back trotter, and then he would open it with his snout and then he'd slam it again with his back trotter. And he would slam the door like a hundred times out of rage.

Rowan Mangan: I knew this was a lie when you started, and nothing that you've told me has convinced me otherwise.

Martha Beck: I swear to God, my veterinarian... Now she may have been lying. But she seemed like an honest woman.

Rowan Mangan: What is it from, the line where it says, "Is that true? It's true that I heard it."



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- Martha Beck: Anyway, stuff like this happens to me. Wild animals come to places where I are... Where I are. And I lose all sense of grammar. No, it happens over and over and over. And once you could have a very improbable experience, but to have it over and over, there's something going on.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. And here's the thing, is I think that while there's this reluctance and resistance to acknowledge this, one of the things that you've told me that during the book tour has come up again and again, is that someone will come on the line from some very reputable media, whatever. Place, a place of media. Wherever they go, those media types.
- Martha Beck: Herds of media off in the desert.
- Rowan Mangan: And you'll be talking to someone who's very, very rationalist materialist, it's science or nothing. And then you'll say something about something magic, because you will, because you're a mystic.
- Martha Beck: Because I come out. I'm always coming out as a mystic.
- Rowan Mangan: You come out again and again. Yeah. And yet you never leave the house.
- Martha Beck: But when I do, I climb a tree and scream and have sex and die.
- Rowan Mangan: That's part of the problem, honestly. 17 years.
- Martha Beck: So yeah, it's the intellectual ones, it's the NPR folk who are like, "Now, you say in your book that you had certain experiences that might be considered paranormal?" And they always say it with a kind of disdain so that they will not be mocked by the culture.
- Rowan Mangan: They get to be safe, but boy, they want to hear it.
- Martha Beck: They just keep bringing it up and bringing it up and bringing it up. And they say, "So do you believe that?" And I have a line that I say, which is, "I don't believe it, but I don't not believe it." And that's the whole binary. You either believe it or you don't. Well, only if you're being really dogmatic about something.
- Rowan Mangan: Because you don't have to reject the science or reject the magic. You have to reject the idea that those things are mutually exclusive. It's the binary nature of it that isn't true. So it's not believe or don't believe. It's neither.



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- Martha Beck: It's so interesting having my obsession with Asian philosophy, because what you're doing is you're trading magic belief mind, science belief mind with open mind, which is not binary. You can't have your side of open and my side of open. If you're open, you're open. So I do believe that that is one way to take your own mind if you've been having mystical experiences, but we're talking about how you deal with the cultural pressure to be a certain way when your nature may want to go another way, and where culture makes you come to consensus so that you agree with everyone, and your nature wants you to come to your senses. And the title of this, or at least one we batted around is, why just five senses?
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, it's interesting, because this is one of these areas where, because we talk about the culture or this culture or that culture, and we can be talking about really different ones in this sense, because you might belong to the kind of culture where it's all atheistic, materialistic, rational, that's the only thing. Or you could be in a religious culture where it sounds like it's the same tone of voice, of absolutely this, but it's talking about walking on water.
- Martha Beck: One thing that was so interesting to me growing up Mormon is they tell you you can have personal revelations and everything. And then I read a book by a Mormon woman who had a near-death experience, and she wrote this book that became a best seller. She was Mormon, and the Mormon church denounced her. And I was like, wait, but you guys believe in-
- Rowan Mangan: Much weirder shit than that.
- Martha Beck: Much weirder than that. And they were like, only if it's our shit.
- Rowan Mangan: That's actually the perfect way of summing up the kind of nonsense that anyone who's a fundamentalist about anything will believe, is this "It's our shit." It's complete nonsense. It's our nonsense.
- Martha Beck: Because it belongs... I am going to get wonky here.... In the part of the brain that makes absolute decisions based on self versus other and then attacks.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh. Tell me more about that.



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- Martha Beck: Yeah. Jonathan Haidt, a fantastic social psychologist calls this, the righteous mind. There's a part of the brain that is ancient and animal and not rational at all. And it bases a sense of safety on being around people who are just like you. So when it sees other, it always others a group that isn't like you or a person that isn't like you, and then it attack attack attack attack attacks. So the Mormons can say yes, every righteous man will have his own planet and infinite women with which to people that planet. And you're like, "Okay, I'm three. What do I know?" And then this woman has a near death experience and they're like, "You didn't have that. That's nonsense."
- Rowan Mangan: That's just too weird.
- Martha Beck: That's just too weird for us to even think about. So yeah, there's this othering, attacking thing that happens that has no basis in rationality, but we have a very educated core of our culture took a position against mystical religions because they were tired of being pushed around by people's religious dogma. And they said, "Look, if you can't measure it, it's not real. Period." And then they started othering mysticism.
- Rowan Mangan: It's the same part of the brain and the same tone of voice.
- Martha Beck: It's not open-minded at all. It's very rigid, very dogmatic, and equally unprovable, I might add.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, it's funny, isn't it? The way that we seem to want to draw a little circle around our little patch and say only this, and nothing else shall ever make an incursion into my beliefs.
- Martha Beck: And right there learning ends, because you're at you're at consensus. There's no more need to consult your senses. Actual science says, look at what's happening to you. But the scientific cultural mainstream says, don't look at what's happening to you. Look at what we know is possible. And it's only these things.
- Rowan Mangan: It reminds me of this episode of The West Wing, as so many things do. If it's not Ani DiFranco lyrics, it's The West Wing. And which I was telling you about recently. There was an episode that was trying to grapple with the whole post-9/11 fundamentalism is what it was about. Not just Islamic fundamentalism, but also equivalence from different cultures. And at the end of the episode, someone says.. It's sort of set up as a play to these high school students, and someone says to them, "If you want to really piss these people off," meaning all the fundamentalists, "If you really want to get them where they live, keep accepting more than one idea." I just love that. And that's what we're talking about, is where we're closed, let us open. What's the worst that can happen?



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Martha Beck: Right. The worst that can happen is you can get hammered by the culture. I really think, and when I was at Harvard, it was very, very apparent to me.

Rowan Mangan: Oh, sorry. Martha, it's pronounced Harvard. Harvard.

Martha Beck: Harvard. Okay. You just work away over there in Oz, at pronouncing Martha. Martha's car went to Harvard.

Okay. I actually decided that the culture of the mainstream educational elite represses mysticism the way people in Freud's culture repressed sexuality. It's a real thing that happens to you, but you're not supposed to admit that it's happening to you, and because of that, you can get all messed up around it. For example, I had a class in Shakespeare and-

Rowan Mangan: Shakespeare.

Martha Beck: Shakespeare.

Rowan Mangan: Shakespeare.

Martha Beck: So we studied all the plays and we studied the four great tragedies, which are very, very dark and nihilistic in some ways. And then with great embarrassment, the professor introduced Shakespeare's romances, which he wrote after the four great tragedies, which end with total devastation. But in the romances, Shakespeare appears to have had a shift of some kind, because he starts writing about similar situations, but with the addition of forgiveness, magic, love as a paradigm that takes us into magic, and it gets quite mystical.

I remember my Shakespeare professor telling us that the only reason he did that was that he was clearly going into dementia, because four great tragedies described the world as it is, horrible and short. Brutish, nasty and short. And the romances are just plain crazy. And I was like, dementia? He was what, 52 when he died? I don't think so. But I think Shakespeare had a mystical... If you read those last plays, it really matches the view of the world that I developed as I became obsessed with the mystery and with contemplating the aspects of the mystery that have come into my life. And the more you do that, the more you have those experiences, I believe.

Rowan Mangan: So the Tempest or whatever was Shakespeare coming out as a mystic.



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Martha Beck: Yeah. And we are such stuff as dreams are made of. I think he had an awakening experience. Part of mysticism, to me, it's not just magic and miracles, but that which in Asia is known as enlightenment or awakening, which is actually just a shift into a world where there's no sense of self and there's no sense of control. They can study this in the brain now. What happens when those two areas of the brain goes silent is an explosion of feeling unity with everything, feeling connected, feeling that you are not identified only with your body, feelings of bliss, joy, intense desire to serve. It's all good stuff. I think it happened to Shakespeare. I think it happened to a lot of people. I just don't think people like to... And so at Harvard they're saying, yeah, it only happens to people in dementia. And I'm like, "You're in dementia." Got a D. No, I didn't.

Rowan Mangan: Of course you didn't.

Martha Beck: I lied, I got a good grade.

Rowan Mangan: It's so funny, Marty, because we've been talking about how this topic sort of taboo, and I identify very much with, I guess, the segments of the culture that are more materialist and rationalist and this is how it is. And I noticed that I'm getting quite embarrassed. I'm getting awkward.

Martha Beck: Because it's time for you to tell a story about being a mystic, right?

Rowan Mangan: Yeah. It's like it's a coming out. So I wanted to tell a story about something that happened to me when I was 18, and then happened to me when I was about 23.

My paternal grandparents lived in Canada, my dad was brought up there, and I got very close with my grandmother in my final year of school. We were corresponding a lot and I had planned to go and stay with her for the bulk of my... Take a gap year and go stay with her after I finished high school. So I was finishing high school, and there was a graduation ceremony at my school at the end of classes. And that night I had a really, really, really intense dream. And the dream was that I was sitting on the end of a little jetty, dangling my legs in the water, and a seal swam up and took my ankle in its mouth and tugged really gently. And so I jumped down into the water and I was swimming around under the water with this seal. And I knew for sure that the seal was my grandmother. It was the most beautiful dream probably that I've ever had. I still can remember it so vividly. There were rays of sunlight coming down through the water. It was so beautiful and so loving, and just the kindness in this seal. You've never seen a kinder seal, Marty.



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Martha Beck: Was it a seal of approval?

Rowan Mangan: Oh no, she went there. And so anyway, I woke up in the morning and my dad came over and told me that my grandmother had died in the night. That in itself felt like a really incredible, magic story. I had to rethink my whole plan. It was just terrible timing, but I'd had this beautiful dream, and it really helped me a lot. One of the things that she had always said was that she wanted to have her ashes thrown from this place where she grew up on the west coast of Ireland. And there were these bridges that have been built along the shoreline, the ocean shoreline. There are pebble beaches. And she always said the second bridge, that's where I want my ashes thrown. Now, when I was in my early twenties, I went to that part of the world for the first time and I didn't have her ashes, but they were in another... Our family's quite far flung, so ashes were in Canada. I'd come from Australia. We're in Ireland. Got it?

I went there with a friend and I wanted to spend a bit of time communing with my grandmother. It was a rainy day, my friend and I were walking along these bridges, and I said to her, "You know what, I'm just going to stay here at the second bridge for a little while." She went off for a walk, and I stood there... Oh, chills. I looked out at the sea and out of the sea, out of the ocean came the head of a seal. It wasn't very far away. It was quite close to the ocean. And that seal, I swear to God, Marty, just swam and dived and was just right there visible for probably, I don't know, half an hour that my friend was off walking. That one seal just stayed there and played, and it was the absolute connection to my dream. There was just no doubt about it. I'm a hundred percent sure that I felt her. And she's still a big part of my life, and she's connected to our daughter, and this.

Martha Beck: So that's why there's a seal in the bathtub? I'm sorry. You have this beautiful, beautiful story, and then I make a joke about it. So wrong.

Rowan Mangan: I'm afraid so. I got really excited when I thought there might be a seal in the bathtub.

Martha Beck: I'm sorry. There was... You can look it up on YouTube... a family in New Zealand who came in and a baby seal had come in from the beach, crossed a highway, gotten in through their dog door, and was lounging upon their sofa. They took it back to the ocean.

Rowan Mangan: They are kind of the dogs of the ocean, aren't they?

Martha Beck: They are. Seals are ye dogs of ye ocean.



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- Rowan Mangan: I think I've been a seal in at least one past life. How about you?
- Martha Beck: I think I was a dog that swam with the seals.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh my God. Maybe we knew each other. Ruff ruff!
- Martha Beck: Okay. So the point is, we've both had mystical experiences. Almost everyone I know has had some kind of mystical experience.
- Rowan Mangan: Even just from the level of those crazy coincidences, all the way up to...
- Martha Beck: And yet, the problem is there's another subculture that goes kind of too far, the other direction.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, that's right.
- Martha Beck: So I have this thing, I've written about it in memoirs and in nonfiction self-help where this happened, deal with it. But for me, it's about redefining reality as something much bigger than rational thinking believes it to be. I think to say that the human brain's rational capacity is the limit of intelligence in the universe is redonkulous. For me it's about seeking a deeper reality, experiencing this unexplainable, ineffable benevolence at the core of the universe and throwing the door open to more definitions of reality. Using more than five senses, right? So I talk about this in my book tour. I based my book around Dante's Divine Comedy, it's all this transcendence, and I think he was awakened and blah blah blah.
- Rowan Mangan: Enlightenment as a brain state that can be proven by science itself.
- Martha Beck: Measured, if not proven. And measured is so good for science. Anyway, then I go on lots of different podcasts, and the NPR people are like, "I don't believe in magic. Tell me all the stories again."
- Rowan Mangan: And then at the other end of the spectrum...
- Martha Beck: Then I go on and this beautiful gentleman interviewed me and we talked about all manner of things. And I told him that once I felt like I was being pulled out of a burning building by mysterious unseen forces, which is true. And I must've told him another time as well, because when he promoed his interview with me, he had this...



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- Rowan Mangan: So he had a little preview of his interview with Marty that he did a little cover for on YouTube where he had he'd taken her photo, her little press kit photo that we had, and then given a little speech bubble to say what Martha had said and then written down in this slide and it said, and I quote, "Angels saved my life twice." Something about the twice. "Angels saved my life twice." Little speech bubble. Martha Beck. Harvard PhD Martha Beck.
- Martha Beck: I'm out of the closet as a mystic. Gay mystic, no less. And I cringe when people put me in that category, because I don't think that's coming to our senses either. I think it's coming to a different kind of consensus. I remember reading in a very popular new age book, which I shall not name, but it said, "Do not observe sick people, or you will become sick." And it also said, "You cannot catch a disease you don't think you can catch." And I was like. And this was extremely popular, this book. And I was like, "No."
- Rowan Mangan: If you think it's the book you're thinking of, it is the book you're thinking of.
- Martha Beck: Actually, can I tell a story around that one too?
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah.
- Martha Beck: So, it was The Secret, by one of your countrymen. Women. People.
- Rowan Mangan: Rhonda. Rhonda Byrne.
- Martha Beck: I thought, everybody's reading this book, and I read it and it said, "You cannot catch a disease you don't think you can catch." And I was like, "Hello."
- Rowan Mangan: [inaudible 00:50:11] must have been thinking about some pretty obscure things in your time.
- Martha Beck: Back the truck up. And yet it annoyed me, because at the same time there was a crossover with the way I experienced things. I was really verklempt about this. I read it on a plane. I got off the plane. Somebody calls me on my cell phone, and I'm walking along and somebody calls and says, "Martha, I just read the book The Secret that everyone is talking about, and you're in it."
- Rowan Mangan: What?
- Martha Beck: I was like, "No, I'm not." And they said, "No, no, no." And I said, "If you thought there's somebody who is me in that book, it's not me." They're like, "No, no, no. They name you."



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- Rowan Mangan: So you were reading on the plane, you got off the plane, and someone called you about the book that you'd been reading.
- Martha Beck: 15 minutes later, someone calls me and says, "You're in this book." I had just read it. I said, "I promise you, I'm not in this book." So then they start reading to me this passage about me. And I'm like, "Where is this from?" I Google it. There's another book called *The Secret* that's written by a rabbi, and he does indeed refer to me. I literally stopped rolling my suitcase. I put it on the floor and I sat down and just held my head in my hands, because it was such a weird coincidence that I'm reading *The Secret*, which says when you think about things, they come toward you, and I'm completely dismissing all of it. And then immediately someone calls me and says, "You're in the book *The Secret*." because they're reading another book called *The Secret* that they think is Rhonda Byrne's *The Secret*. And I am in fact in it.
- Rowan Mangan: The extra layer is you really don't want to be associated with the kind of thinking. Sorry for anyone who loves *The Secret*. We love it in a way too, but...
- Martha Beck: Actually, I must plug my own book here, because I have found this. That yes, it does work the way they say it does in *The Secret*. If you think of things deeply, they come to you on one condition. You have to be living in complete integrity, which means coming to your senses, looking at the way the world is working, and making sure that it adds up according to the scientific method. Yes. So the math works, but also the soul, the body and the heart have come to the party. And they're all giving you a united sense of yes, this... And I call it the sense of truth, because we don't have access to any truth that isn't subjective. Everything's filtered through our perceptions. So nothing's objectively true. So when every aspect of our being, all our meaning-making systems says, yes, this is true. You can tell that you had a dream, you woke up, now you're awake. Because the meaning-making systems all say, this feels real. This feels true. So yeah, if you get into total alignment with honesty about what's actually happening to you, then stuff that you think about happens even more frequently. I have to say it. It happens to me all the time. Anyway. So let's talk about coming to our senses.
- Rowan Mangan: Can I just ask you a question about that?
- Martha Beck: Sure.
- Rowan Mangan: Bitch, where's my Ferrari?
- Martha Beck: I cannot in my integrity allow you to drive my Ferrari.



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Rowan Mangan: All right. So, so how do we come to our senses? However many we want to say that we have. I think there's at least nine or ten.

Martha Beck: They think trees have about 15 senses that we know of.

Rowan Mangan: You're kidding.

Martha Beck: I'm not kidding at all.

Rowan Mangan: Oh, I love that. [crosstalk 00:53:34].

Martha Beck: And that's scientific, that's not the whole...

Rowan Mangan: Here's the secret. Trees have got 15 senses. Bye.

Martha Beck: 15. You figure it out.

Rowan Mangan: Oh, that just reminded me, because I just went into a Russell Brand mode that I wanted to talk about the cultural shaming by the... I know we're supposed to be moving on, but I don't care. I'm going back.

Martha Beck: This is one of the ways out, though. This is one of the ways to come to your senses.

Rowan Mangan: Oh, cool. All right. So Russell Brand, famed ne'er do well, spiritual guru sex addict. I don't know what he is. He's a funny British man.

Martha Beck: A phenomenon, that's what he is.

Rowan Mangan: A funny phenomenon. He interviewed... I used to listen to his podcast fanatically, religiously. Fundamentalistally.

Martha Beck: She believed it completely.

Rowan Mangan: I did. I believed every word.

Martha Beck: It was her entire belief system.

Rowan Mangan: That's actually not far off the truth. He interviewed Richard Dawkins once, of The God Delusion.

Martha Beck: Okay. So Richard Dawkins, if you haven't run into him, is the meanest atheist ever to write a book. He doesn't just say there is no God, he basically climbs out of the pages, grabs you by the face, and says, "If you believe in a God, I will bite your freaking nose off, you moron." So go on.



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- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. That's little Dickie Dawkins. Sorry. Russell Brand is interviewing him, and he says, "I can't help feeling that there is more. I know that you're saying this..." And Richard Dawkins "Well, of course that's just silly." And Russell, I just never forget, there's this lovely sort of pathos to him coming back to Dawkins and saying, "Oh, but come on, Richard, can't a feeling be as good as a thought? Come on, give us a cuddle." I don't know why, but there is part of my personal paradigm of the world that says why can't a feeling be as good as a thought? That's profound.
- Martha Beck: It is. And the way he put it managed to get through the barriers of the fundamentalist materialist by being so funny that he's immune to shaming. Because shaming is the great tool of the culture. And it will shame the crap out of you if you say that a feeling is as good as a thought. But everyone feels that way. Except maybe Richard Dawkins.
- Rowan Mangan: Imagine you went to Richard Dawkins and you were like, "Hey, Richard Dawkins. Angels saved my life. Twice." He would spontaneously combust.
- Martha Beck: Okay. There's one. Humor. Another thing that you can do, if you want to come out as a mystic and you don't know how to be funny, is indifference. This happened to me once. I was writing away on another book, and I was [crosstalk 00:56:32].
- Rowan Mangan: Listener, I would love for you to see Martha's little gesture that she does to indicate writing. She's like vaguely typing, but she actually looks more like she's having a panic attack.
- Martha Beck: I flap my hands a lot. Okay. So I'm writing away, and I'm writing about my son Adam, who has Down Syndrome and everybody said he would be a big drain on my life, and instead I said the way I experience it is that I live with a spiritual master. And then I had to go back, because I always go back and I make it more palatable to the culture by saying, "Oh, so I think he's kind of a spiritual master, but that's just because in my emotional way, I blah blah blah, whatever you believe in is fine with me."
- Rowan Mangan: Don't take me seriously.
- Martha Beck: And instead I went back there and I wrote down, "If you disagree with me" and I was going to say, "I totally understand." and I found myself typing "I respectfully do not care."
- Rowan Mangan: Amen.



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Martha Beck: I decided that about all my weird mystical experiences, if you want to mock me and shame me, I respectfully do not care. And I am really there, after a lot of years of this.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah. We talked in our last episode about being free to be as weird as you really are. And I think that this is like a branch of that, is "Yep. Also, sometimes angels saved my life more than once."

Martha Beck: More than once in fact, how many times? Twice.

Rowan Mangan: Twice.

Martha Beck: So it's interesting though, because the scientific method is what people say they're believing when they completely dismiss anything mystical. But the actual scientific method is to observe what can be observed and try to make some meaning out of it. Now here's the thing, Ro. I've thought this often. Some people can see the rings of Saturn, I guess without a telescope, but I can't. Most people can't. So if you said, "Look, I have watched Saturn through a telescope and it has all these rings around it. Come and look." A scientist might say "No, no, no. I only believe what I see. And I don't see rings around Saturn." And you say, "Well, look through the telescope, you'll see more rings." And the scientist says, "That's nonsense. You're just playing party games. I see what I see. There are no rings around Saturn." Okay.

Change the telescope to meditation. If you meditate for a long period of time, weird shit starts to come down. Meditation traditions say it's of no great significance, but yes, you will experience magic. You will have visions. You will have paranormal experiences. Don't worry about it, it's all part of growing as a human being, just keep meditating and contemplating the absolute. So you say to a scientist, look, I got all these visions when I was in meditation, and they say, "You're just deluding yourself." And you say, "Try meditation." And they say, "No, I believe what I see. There are no visions. There are no paranormal experiences." So they're not using the scientific method. They're using the scientific culture, which is actually not the scientific method. The scientific method blew Newton's physics out of the water a hundred years ago, as I say, I think, every single episode. But I say it because the culture never moved on from "Things are just randomly bonking around." And that is not what science tells us now.

Rowan Mangan: Randomly bonking around: a memoir.



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- Martha Beck: So I say, use the scientific method on your magic. And I mentioned it a minute ago. Bring all your meaning-making systems to the table, because your cognitive sequential brain, the verbal brain is much weaker and less evolved than the parts governing emotion and physical responses and whatever spiritual experiences actually are. Those are ancient, ancient, ancient. So sit with an experience, and instead of saying "It's not real, because people will mock me if I claim it is." Feel what's right in every aspect of your meaning-making apparatus. So it should feel like opening emotionally. An opening of mind, but also an opening of heart. It should feel like relaxation in the body, because the body relaxes when it feels truth. If you believe in the soul at all, it feels free, as opposed to not free, when it finds something true. And the mind basically says, I see how the math could work. If I go and read quantum physics, I'm like, "Yeah, that math could work." So that's what I say, is bring all your scientific rigor to your experiences, but don't throw them out because of scientific culture.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. And I would add, if you have a resistance to something, just check out if that's the embarrassment of the culture working on you, as opposed to there being an adverse nature to what you're looking at. So I think I'm understanding you right, Marty. To come to our senses when it comes to magic, you want to climb to the top of a tree-
- Martha Beck: Well, first you take off all your clothes.
- Rowan Mangan: Take off all your clothes. Top of the tree screaming.
- Martha Beck: Scream.
- Rowan Mangan: You want to make friends with seals and put them in your bathtub. Go to Harvard and read The Secret there.
- Martha Beck: That's it. Done. Boom, mic drop.
- Rowan Mangan: All right. I think we've solved magic.
- Martha Beck: I think we have. So come out of the consensus that says there is no magic. Come into your senses and just see how much magic there is. Really, truly, when you start to take it seriously and apply rigorous thought to it, it starts to look a lot more solid.
- Rowan Mangan: Don't forget, peeps. Stay wild.



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