



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Episode #13: As Good As It Gets?

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. And you have arrived in another episode of Bewildered. The podcast for people trying to figure it out. I've been trying to figure it out by counting on my fingers lately. But Marty suddenly came and noticed she had toes and she figured it out immediately.
- Martha Beck: Well, not immediately. Because now I have a sort of haploid toe on one foot.
- Rowan Mangan: What's a haploid toe?
- Martha Beck: Well, what it involves is a Chevron graft, which sounds like a carpentry skill. They saw your bones in two, then they graft them into one, then they pin them together and wait for two toes to go into one.
- Rowan Mangan: This isn't a metaphor.
- Martha Beck: No, and it's also not something I chose electively as plastic surgery for appearance. "Oh, look at me. Now I have a haploid toe. I'll never wear full shoes again."
- Rowan Mangan: When you say a haploid toe, to me, it sounds kind of like a hapless toe. Just a toe that's always done on its luck.
- Martha Beck: If you only knew how sad it feels right now.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh, poor thing.



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- Martha Beck: No, I had bone problems and they had to fix my foot. So, now I have nine toes, and when I tried to figure it all out, my calculations were off and I ended up figuring out that I was an iguana woman living near Alpha Centauri, and so are you.
- Rowan Mangan: Thank you.
- Martha Beck: Sure.
- Rowan Mangan: But maybe that is... I mean, I haven't figured it out. I can't say for sure that you're wrong.
- Martha Beck: Oh my god, maybe we're all just in some guy's dream?
- Rowan Mangan: Oh my god.
- Martha Beck: God.
- Rowan Mangan: All right, I'll tell you what I'm trying to figure out for real-sies is, how come I sing everything now? Since Lila was born, 11 and a bit months ago, I've gone from a person who sort of comports myself more or less like other human beings, to someone who compulsively sings everything. And I don't mean like, here I am, I talk to Marty, and then I go away and sing a happy tune as I do the dishes. No, I just go up to Marty and instead of talking, I sing. And so, my inner monologue comes out in song.
- Martha Beck: Can I tell them about how I told you about my dream?
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, if you follow me in Instagram, you may have already seen video of this.
- Martha Beck: But the thing is, it just came out. I did not mean to sing it. And I was just talking to Ro one morning and I just said, "I dreamed a dream that there were monkeys and they were riding on a go-kart." And that was the whole... that was my entire song. And it just came out and she was like, "What?" And I was like, "Well, they were."
- Rowan Mangan: Upstairs earlier today, if I'm not wrong, you spontaneously wrote a second verse to that, didn't you?
- Martha Beck: "Some of them were kind of chunky and some of them were working on a flow chart," yes. But that was just for the sake of rhyme. That was not really in the dream.
- Rowan Mangan: Wasn't really in the dream, no.



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Martha Beck: No, I saved my integrity and tell you it wasn't really in the dream. The flow chart is pure invention.

Rowan Mangan: Invention, that's on topic.

Martha Beck: Oh, we'll be talking about that.

Rowan Mangan: Little sneak peek there. Anyway, what are you trying to figure out, Marty?

Martha Beck: Honest to God, I'm trying to figure out how to be a person with two feet instead of one. Because part of growing less toes was growing less feet for awhile. I was off-

Rowan Mangan: Hang on. Back up a bit. Growing less toes?

Martha Beck: Minimizing? Subtracting a toe.

Rowan Mangan: Okay.

Martha Beck: The process of subtracting a toe, folks, subtracts a foot, for a least a couple months.

Rowan Mangan: Gotcha.

Martha Beck: Don't let them lie to you and say, "You'll been fine after the first two weeks." No, your whole body goes, "What the eff just happened to my foot?" Will not move. And it's great, because then you just tell people, "I'd love to do the laundry, but. I'd love to get the baby, but." You don't have to do anything. And then if you do, you do it crawling. And you look so pathetic that people in the family feel sad for you forever.

Rowan Mangan: She's never actually had to do the actual crawling. All she does is, "I suppose I could hop over there. I guess I could crutch my way across the room if I must."

Martha Beck: I have crawled. It was just below your line of sight.

Rowan Mangan: Was that you?

Martha Beck: And I thought shouting was overkill, so I just grunted like, [inaudible 00:05:11]. But the thing is, when you've already got one person in the family who crawls around grunting and is perfectly normal and we're like, "Yay, she's crawling and grunting." And then when I do it, nobody sees how pathetic I am.

Rowan Mangan: Oh no, we see. It's okay, honey. We do see. Oh, dear. All right.



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Martha Beck: So yeah, I got to figure out how to have two feet again and it's kind of a drag, but I guess there are some perks.

Rowan Mangan: Listener questions, Marty.

Martha Beck: Woo-hoo.

Rowan Mangan: We got them. Well, they're not so much questions as, I, on my Instagram, asked our listeners, as I am one to do, from time to time, "What are you all trying to figure out?"

Martha Beck: Right.

Rowan Mangan: And you told us. You weren't shy.

Martha Beck: Not at all. So many people told us.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah, we had a great conversation just based on all your amazing responses. We can't talk about them all, that's what it comes down to. But I'm going to talk about a couple.

Martha Beck: We can talk a few, yeah.

Rowan Mangan: A few, yeah.

Martha Beck: Let's try it.

Rowan Mangan: Thanks for sharing, though. That's the main thing.

Martha Beck: Yes, everybody. Thank you very much.

Rowan Mangan: Thank you. Yeah. Yeah.

Martha Beck: Should we jump in?

Rowan Mangan: Let's jump in.

Martha Beck: Okay.

Rowan Mangan: The first one that I, for some reason, this, to me, epitomizes that bewildered state of the world that we live in. And this question, I don't know how to say peoples' Instagram name, but it's-

Martha Beck: Buddafield.

Rowan Mangan: But it's got no 'L'. Buddafied, surely.



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Martha Beck: Oh, Buddafied. I was projecting the field part.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah, I think she's just becoming more Buddaed. She's becoming Buddaed.

Martha Beck: I think it's Buddafied.

Rowan Mangan: Buddafied?

Martha Beck: Anyway, what did Buddafied have to say?

Rowan Mangan: What she said is, "With so many streaming services, my beaux and I can never find something to watch." And I'm like, right? Right? I mean, this is a classic dilemma of our age. And it reminded me of a term, now when I say reminded me, it prompted me to Google and discover for the first time, I term which now I'm reminded of, which is over-choice. And it's from the 1970 book, Future Shock. And Marty, if you would allow me to flagrantly quote from Wikipedia for a moment?

Martha Beck: Absolutely.

Rowan Mangan: No, I can't do that.

Martha Beck: Sure you can, go for it. Everyone does it. A wiki quote? Oh my god, you are so daring.

Rowan Mangan: Basically, what it says is we think as we get more choices we'll more satisfaction, because initially that is what happens. If you have one thing and then you have three things, it's like, "O-M-G, check it out, I've got three things." But the fact is, when you suddenly have 57 things, it stops being more satisfying and actually as the inverse effect. Because as the number of choices increases, Wikipedia says, it then peaks. You should never read things out. And people tend to feel more pressure, confusion, and potentially dissatisfaction with their choice. Although larger choice sets can be initially appealing, smaller choice sets lead to increased satisfaction and reduced regret. And so, what that tells me is we shouldn't have as many streaming services.

Martha Beck: We are being inflicted upon by all these channels.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah.

Martha Beck: We are victims. We are victims of the multi-channel. No, we are not. I don't seriously think I'm a victim you guys. But I happen to know why this works in your brain.



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- Rowan Mangan: Why?
- Martha Beck: Because there's a thing in there called the attention bottleneck.
- Rowan Mangan: Are you sure?
- Martha Beck: Yes, I am.
- Rowan Mangan: In my brain?
- Martha Beck: I once ghostwrote a chapter in a fancy, non-fiction business book, called The Attention Economy. And I wrote about why peoples' attention gets scattered, yes?
- Rowan Mangan: Question?
- Martha Beck: Yes?
- Rowan Mangan: If you are truly ghostwriting, are you allowed to tell people?
- Martha Beck: Yes, what do you think haunting is for? Popping up in these peoples' dreams going, "I wrote a chapter." They get ghost hunters coming in and they get, "I wrote a chapter." Yeah, just reading the chapter is sort of frightening, I think. It was written by a ghost. Anyway, the point is, I did the research. And there is, in the brain, something called the attention bottleneck. And it's to keep people from going insane from ADD. And all animals have it and this is why herd animals exist. You get a bunch of, say, antelope. And you think getting in a bunch would be a stupid thing to do if there's a predator around, because now it's like, "He'll get-"
- Rowan Mangan: A big bunch.
- Martha Beck: Yeah, "We're in a big bunch. [inaudible 00:10:03], he can get us all." But the fact is that in every predator's brain, the attention bottleneck that keeps it from going insane from ADD, gets confused by too much data. So, if all the antelopes start running around what happens is that the tiger or the lion just stops and kind of stares at them with a glazed expression and if it can't focus on just one animal that's lagging or whatever, it doesn't even charge. And neither do we. We don't charge.
- Rowan Mangan: I'm just picturing the... did you say lion? What predator were you using?
- Martha Beck: I started with tiger, I went to lion. I like to be equal opportunity predator.



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Rowan Mangan: Okay. So, the cougar's there and-

Martha Beck: I did not say cougar.

Rowan Mangan: Why's that, Marty?

Martha Beck: Oh.

Rowan Mangan: Oh, little double entendre there. Okay, he's got a remote. That's my joke. Like, because he's got a remote. He's seen one antelope and he's like, "Yeah, that looks good. That looks good. It's got 86% on Rotten Tomatoes." But then he sees another one right next to it and he's like, "Oh, wait, wait, wait, wait. I'm not sure about the first one now."

Martha Beck: "That one looks funnier."

Rowan Mangan: "But this one was written by the same guy who-"

Martha Beck: Right. "This one has the same spawn mother as the one liked so much last season."

Rowan Mangan: The same?

Martha Beck: I said spawn mother. I meant biological mother. I'm sorry. It works if you have a dictionary and a very loose mind.

Rowan Mangan: All right.

Martha Beck: No, but seriously. It leads to something called decision fatigue. In judges... they've done studies. If you're going to be tried in a criminal court, make sure you do it before lunch. Because judges are very careful to consider all the evidence before lunch. But by the time they've gone through half the day, they have such severe decision fatigue that they can't even look at all the facts and they just start sending people to prison.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah. Right.

Martha Beck: Yeah, I'm not kidding.

Rowan Mangan: No, no, I totally buy it.

Martha Beck: It's a real thing.

Rowan Mangan: It's actually quite horrifying.



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- Martha Beck: But those things are real. But then there's those other things, speaking of ghosts and spooky. There's this thing where you're just ready for a certain media item. And you have to be turned to your inner media readiness. We did not watch-
- Rowan Mangan: Ted Lasso. Because we watched five minutes of it and hated it.
- Martha Beck: We were just like, "Why does everybody we love, love Ted Lasso? This is ridiculous." And then, like, six weeks later.
- Rowan Mangan: We were ready.
- Martha Beck: And we were like, "Why do we want to watch Ted Lasso? I don't know." And we watched 10 minutes of it and we were like, "This is the best thing ever created."
- Rowan Mangan: It is, you guys. You should watch it. It's good. All right. So, one of the things that I want to draw your attention to right now is that before we started this little item, off-air we said to ourselves, "Now, the main thing is that we don't go on for too long about this stuff." Now-
- Martha Beck: I did.
- Rowan Mangan: We. We did. We did. But you know what? Look, the whole thing about streaming services is really relevant and important and I stand-
- Martha Beck: Who doesn't need to talk about that at this point in history?
- Rowan Mangan: Exactly. Exactly. It's what's up.
- Martha Beck: We have to figure it out. Watch what you are ready to watch. And keep your mind open. That's what I say.
- Rowan Mangan: An unsubscribe to all those, like, Britbox. Seriously, people? You really need Britbox? How much Inspector Morse can one person watch? Ladovarose. Ladovarose. Lad over rose... I don't know. Ladovarose-
- Martha Beck: Ladovarose.
- Rowan Mangan: ... says, "How to find a partner to build a life with." This is what this person is trying to figure out. And asks, we don't know the gender of this person, "How did you guys know? How sure were you?" And we thought, "Let's finally go there."
- Martha Beck: "This is a good time to just say it."



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- Rowan Mangan: "Let's just go there," because we don't really talk about our relationship on the podcast very much.
- Martha Beck: Yeah, and yeah, I say, "This is my partner Rowan." And sometimes people will go, "But what happened to your longtime partner Karen?" And I go-
- Rowan Mangan: Murder!
- Martha Beck: I got, "Nothing." And they're like, "Enough said." And then I walk away and just leave them going, "What?" So, yeah. That's actually what happened. Karen and I... that was my first ever female relationship was with Karen.
- Rowan Mangan: Female on female.
- Martha Beck: Hey now. And we were very happy. And then Row came to visit us, or our general environs, and we all go to-
- Rowan Mangan: Hello.
- Martha Beck: And one day Karen came to me and said, "I'm having the strangest feelings about Row-"
- Rowan Mangan: In my general environs.
- Martha Beck: "I feel weirdly connected to her."
- Rowan Mangan: In my general environs.
- Martha Beck: Oh, stop with it. I can't handle it. And I looked at Karen and I was like, "Karen, I think you are developing a relationship with Row." And here's the weird thing, you guys. This was not part of my worldview, it was not part of the possibility field for me. I just thought that Karen and Row were going to get together and I would move into the guestroom. And the feeling I had was one of overwhelming joy. I looked for jealousy, I looked for everything. And it was like getting hit by a joy train. I felt this explosion of joy.
- Rowan Mangan: Hit by a joy train. In my general environs.
- Martha Beck: And we've just been singing to each other ever since. But and so I said, "Bring her up to the house, let's all get to know each other." And we sat around, nothing happened for the longest time except sitting around and talking a lot.
- Rowan Mangan: Well, they brought me up to their house. You know what I mean?



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Martha Beck: She'd been living in the gutter, eating bones and scraps we threw out.

Rowan Mangan: "Bring her up from the dungeon, Karen. We may finally have some use for her."

Martha Beck: So, we all just started talking and it just, over a period of days and weeks, it become incontrovertibly clear that all three of us were in love with each other.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah. And here's the thing, there are people who love being cultural mavericks. We're not that people.

Martha Beck: No.

Rowan Mangan: We didn't go looking for this.

Martha Beck: Oh no.

Rowan Mangan: Believe me.

Martha Beck: Oh, no, no, no. We resisted it. We were like, "This cannot be happening." Of course, nobody wanted to say it for a while.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah. Then Karen solved that for us.

Martha Beck: Karen just started telling people.

Rowan Mangan: What happened was we were going to see some friends, in the dungeon.

Martha Beck: And we practiced our script.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah, because we were going to-

Martha Beck: Nothing had happened yet.

Rowan Mangan: Oh, stop talking about things happening.

Martha Beck: All right, okay. Nothing's ever happened.

Rowan Mangan: Nothing has ever or will ever happen in our general environs.

Martha Beck: But we do have a baby. Figure it out.



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Rowan Mangan: Oh my god. So, we were like, "Okay, hey we just love each other. It's just like a family."

Martha Beck: It's a family. We have a family bond. We have a serious strong family bond. We never want to live without each other. Any of us.

Rowan Mangan: And then we went down to see our friends, and as luck would have it-

Martha Beck: Yeah, god.

Rowan Mangan: This is just how these things happen, right? This friend of ours had his phone open and was reading aloud a post from someone we kind of knew on Facebook about polyamory.

Martha Beck: Which term still makes me feel weird.

Rowan Mangan: Faint?

Martha Beck: Yeah, I feel funny in my tummy.

Rowan Mangan: Nothing against polyamory.

Martha Beck: Nothing against those of us who are that.

Rowan Mangan: No, nothing against us.

Martha Beck: Nothing against myself. But yeah, we were not comfortable with it at all.

Rowan Mangan: But Karen likes to get the job done. That's her kind of way, "Let's not dillydally. We're a family. Hey, it's just like we're just a family together. It's just like that."

Martha Beck: Yeah.

Rowan Mangan: And we walked into the room. Our friend's reading about this polyamory post. And Karen just-

Martha Beck: She just rears up on her hind legs, as only Karen can do and shouts, "Well, I love Marty and I love Row. I'm going to get Thai food." And left.

Rowan Mangan: Ran out the door, leaving us in a room with about eight other people, and a deathly silence.

Martha Beck: Oh god. I have PTSD from this experience.



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- Rowan Mangan: You know what's really funny, is we're telling this story like we're under duress. And what Ladovarorse has said, really is not-
- Martha Beck: Why are you-
- Rowan Mangan: ... "Tell me the history of your weird-ass relationship." All right.
- Martha Beck: But no, what I want to say though is it was seriously not optional. There have been a few times in my life, when my son Adam was born is one, and this was another, when I felt as if some kind of cosmic force was literally moving me like a puppet and I had no ability to resist it.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, and it's something that's very real for us when we talk about culture and nature and we talk about how, "Yeah, you're going to end up looking weird. We know from what we say. We are talking about this stuff." And I got to say, my palms are sweating right now.
- Martha Beck: Oh, this is not easy.
- Rowan Mangan: No. It's really vulnerable to talk about this, because I don't want to be this much of a weirdo, but I am.
- Martha Beck: We just heard about someone who is very well-followed on Instagram who came out as being in a throuple and lost 18,000 followers the next day and they all wanted to hurt her with everything they owned.
- Rowan Mangan: Bit of an exaggeration there, but yeah, it was a bit of a wake-up call.
- Martha Beck: It was gnarly.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah.
- Martha Beck: It was gnarly. Yeah, because we don't understand it. I don't understand it. It just works. It feels like a three-legged stool. So, yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: I think we were right at the beginning with the whole family thing. That's what it feels like.
- Martha Beck: Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: It's like, if you don't understand it, if this feels weird to you, we're a five person family.



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Martha Beck: That's it.

Rowan Mangan: That's it. That's how we have to think about, "What car are we getting?"

Martha Beck: Can I say one other thing? When I was a kid, I loved the Walt Disney show *Sleeping Beauty*, where three little fairies, raise the little girl in the woods. And honest to God, that is our life, if you bring in my son Adam, who is like a wizard.

Rowan Mangan: Periodically, Marty comes up with things that she thinks will make the news of how we live more palatable to the general public. At one point, she thought the way that we bought each other rings when we got married-

Martha Beck: It is, it works.

Rowan Mangan: ... was the thing. She's like, "If you just tell them about the rings, they won't think we're strange." And so, she has this long elaborate story about the different rose gold, whatever-

Martha Beck: It's-

Rowan Mangan: Don't. We're not going into it.

Martha Beck: I'll tell the story if they want it. Okay, if they want it, they can ask. I will tell it.

Rowan Mangan: All right.

Martha Beck: It'll make you feel normal about the whole thing.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah, no doubt. "How did you guys know?" We tried not to. Let's just say that.

Martha Beck: Yeah.

Rowan Mangan: "How sure were you?" Pretty sure.

Martha Beck: It's really interesting. I tried desperately not to fall in love with Karen because I didn't want to be gay. And that was a no deal. And then I tried desperately not to fall in love in a three person relationship. And if you were trying hard not to fall in love and you're still in love, I think you're kind of sure.

Rowan Mangan: Nothing is more romantic than the person that you've been spending more and more time with, bursting into tears on the couch and groaning, "Oh my God. I'm in love with you."



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- Martha Beck: It was horrible. It was horrible.
- Rowan Mangan: She's like, "I have to be in my integrity. So I've got to go tell our friend Steven."
- Martha Beck: "I have to tell everyone in the world. Oh no, I can't leave my integrity. I am in so much trouble." It was awful. And it's been amazing and wonderful. It's been so awesome.
- Rowan Mangan: It's good old life.
- Martha Beck: Anyway, we said we wouldn't go on and on, and here we are.
- Rowan Mangan: On and on. All right. Just-resonate.
- Martha Beck: Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: Very easy to read name, says, "I'm 52 a feel like my life is just beginning. It's a good bewildered." I hear you.
- Martha Beck: Amen. I took a little online quiz and it said that I was going to live to be 106. And it changed the way I do everything. Because I was like, I'm used to thinking, "What if I only had a year to live?" But I never thought, "What if I have 50 years to live?" And then it was like, "I better get hobbies going. And life became [crosstalk 00:22:52]."
- Rowan Mangan: She's like, "You guys, seriously. I need to get this foot surgery."
- Martha Beck: Yeah, that's why I got my toes melded. I'm like, I thought I was just going to limp into the grave, but apparently I've got some life in me. And it's a great way to be bewildered.
- Rowan Mangan: It is. And it's a great way to stick up your middle finger at the culture, because there is so much cultural stuff and we don't even realize that it's cultural stuff, about what aging is and what you can't wear after a certain age or whatever. And there's really insidious things that go into our heads about how physically fit we can expect to be. And I'm really coming up against all of that now. And at 41, I've just decided I'm going to be in the best physical shape of my life, in my 40s. I'm going to be more strong, I'm going to have more energy. And this body is what it is. And I will do the absolute best that I can by it, and why not?



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- Martha Beck: Hey, everybody out there can read a book called Extra Life by Steven Johnson, which is about how we've doubled our life expectancy, humans have, over the past 100 years. I mean, life expectancy is going on and on and on these days. And nobody would have thought, 100 years ago, that we could expect to live to 80. So, we've basically all got two lives, according to the culture, already. And getting more. So, I say jump in, have a wild rumpus.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh I love it.
- Martha Beck: It's the beginning.
- Rowan Mangan: I love it. I love it.
- Martha Beck: So, as you know, in this podcast, we help people, that would be you, from bewilderment or bewildment. Going back to our nature and getting away from traps that culture sets that keep us away from our happiness.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, and in this episode, what we want to talk about is a sort of phenomenon that we think comes up where you're doing your best, you're living your life and it's not bad.
- Martha Beck: Not bad.
- Rowan Mangan: And you sort of think, "Oh, this is fine."
- Martha Beck: Fine.
- Rowan Mangan: It's fine.
- Martha Beck: How are you feeling?
- Rowan Mangan: Fine.
- Martha Beck: How's your job?
- Rowan Mangan: Fine.
- Martha Beck: Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: Fine. How's yours?
- Martha Beck: It's fine.
- Rowan Mangan: How's your foot?



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Martha Beck: It's fine.

Rowan Mangan: Is that it, though? We might ask ourselves, hypothetically.

Martha Beck: One might say.

Rowan Mangan: One might. One very might. And so, this is why we've called it, As Good As It Gets? With a little question mark, because you might be able to figure out that we have an opinion about whether that's as good as it gets or not.

Martha Beck: And I've had a zillion clients come to me and actually, I just was interviewed by a famous person last night who asked this very question. She said, "My life is really good. Better than most peoples' lives. And I just kept thinking, 'This is it? That's all there is? What?'" And I said to her, what I've said to say many people, "That could be just anxiety invading a perfect life, but it's more likely your wild self saying, 'Hey, there's more for you.' I really think it's your wild self saying there's more for you."

Rowan Mangan: And maybe that's because when we think, "Oh, I've arrived in all my wildest dreams, they're not your wildest dreams. They're your tamest dreams. They're the culture's dreams." Some of them. I'm not saying for sure, but I think that this woman who you were talking to yesterday, had reached a lot of the sort of pinnacle of what-

Martha Beck: Oh yeah.

Rowan Mangan: ... our culture would see as a perfect life.

Martha Beck: Yeah, absolutely.

Rowan Mangan: And that's when we get to that point of like, "Oh right, maybe it's not all about that."

Martha Beck: And it makes me think of my favorite quote from Helen Keller, who said, "Life is a daring adventure, or nothing." So, and because of her disability, she had to be daring of every single moment of every single day. But even when she got used to speaking in public and got past her disabilities in so many ways, she was still an incredibly daring woman. Nobody knows she was a communist and very outspoken. People tend to mush over that part. But she was. You can agree or disagree with her politics, you got to admit she was being brave. And I think most people in our culture say, "Yeah, adventure, yeah. Everything's a daring adventure, daring adventure."



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AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Rowan Mangan: And here's the thing, you can be having adventures and they still might not be fulfilling. Even adventures themselves can be kind of a cultural cliché. And that's what we're getting at this week.
- Martha Beck: So, when I coach people, one of the things I used to do, and I still do it, but at a different point in the coaching, and it's called the ideal day scenario. And what it is is, you picture that your life is as perfect as it could possibly be. All your dreams have been realized and this is a typical day in that life. And I would start people right out. I'd sit them down and say, "Give me your ideal day scenario and they would describe this. "I wake up in a hotel room..." no, not a hotel room, but it seemed like a hotel room. "I wake up in a room, all the walls are white, there's natural wood in a few places and huge windows everywhere. Outside I hear the ocean and birds and a fragrance of pine. I go to my white marble bathroom and I take my white marble shower and I put on my white peasant blouse, and my flowing skirt, which is white. And I run to the beach in my little sandal thongs. And I talk to all the people." And I'd say, "What do the people look like?" And they're say, "They're all wearing white peasant blouses."
- Martha Beck: And I was like, "What's going on?" I finally realized they were just basically giving me an Under the Tuscan Sun cliché. And then men all wanted to own bars, typically. Wanted to own bars on the beach. And the women wanted to, I don't know, paint watercolors and sell them on the boardwalk or something, or vice versa, there were a few that skipped the gender divide. But generally, it was the same damn day. And it sounded boring. And I'd say, "What do you do on week six of that day?"
- Rowan Mangan: So, the thing is though, what strikes me about that story is, yeah, there's probably a really big mainstream kind of, I don't know, like interior decorating magazine kind of version of this, in the culture. But I think that it's... again, it can be sneaky. Because I think you and I have both had experiences of having daring adventures that, they're not the mainstream culture's idea, but they can still be cultural, right? There's all kinds of different ways that you can be having adventures, whatever. Whatever your adventure is. How you go to the market and buy your peaches. I'm not talking about necessarily huge adventures. But-
- Martha Beck: You love going to the market to buy the peaches.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh my god. I really do.
- Martha Beck: But that's for later. That's a real adventure. These adventures are taken from subcultures.



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Rowan Mangan: Yeah. Yeah. I just want to say, it's not just Under the Tuscan Sun and buying a bar. It's sort of like there's lots of different ways we can design a life that is still no as wild as we think it is, if that makes sense.

Martha Beck: Yeah, it's based on a cliché. Which I did.

Rowan Mangan: Go on?

Martha Beck: Like, my whole thing was, "Oh, my father was a professor." That's what was approved of in my family culture. So, "Yes, I'll do well at school. I'll go to Harvard, I'll get a PhD, I'll be a professor. And then I'll be a writer and I'll get on the bestseller list and I'll go on speaking tours and people will stand and cheer for me. And I'll be on the Oprah Show and have fancy photo shoots in New York City." I mean, this is the stuff of extreme privilege, right? Massive privilege, that I fought for with every ounce of energy. I didn't sleep for decades, pursuing that dream. And every single time one of them would happen, I'd think, "It happened. I think I did it wrong, because I don't feel very good."

Rowan Mangan: Yeah.

Martha Beck: Yeah.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah, and those were adventures. And yet, sometimes the adventure is still the culture.

Martha Beck: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Rowan Mangan: So, for me, it's was... I'm much more of a little ratbag than you.

Martha Beck: Oh, you're so much cooler. That's the thing. You're just cool.

Rowan Mangan: So, for me, when I think about the adventures I was having that probably were, looking back, there was as much culture as there was nature, and it is running around, going to music festivals and not washing for a week and moshing to whatever grunge band, or rip-off 90s grunge band that Australia could produce. And I did a lot of travel, some of which was really very much true to my nature. But there was the time that I decided, and this isn't everyone's culture speaking. But my little culture of the most far-flung place you can go, the cooler you are, and that's how I ended up in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 2006, thinking to myself, "Ha, ha, ha, ha. I will go to the place no one goes, and that's how I will discover even though no one goes there, it's actually amazing." And I am really, really sorry to any Kyrgyz listeners that we have, but oh my God. Don't go there. It really... yeah.



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Martha Beck: Hey, the beer was strong.

Rowan Mangan: The beer, oh, the beer was strong. There was beer... anyway, there was strong beer. A lot of snow. There was some sort of soup with mystery items floating around in it. I mean, bless them. Bless them. I mean, what a lovely place. Oh, dear. There's no way out. I'm sorry. I'm sure it's lovely in the spring.

Martha Beck: You went there in the winter.

Rowan Mangan: I did go there in the winter, yeah. I was so sure that it was going to be amazing. So, that was definitely culture. And I found myself out on the street in Galway Island... I think we might have talked about this before... with my guitar, strumming away for euros. And that was a lovely adventure.

Martha Beck: How romantic is that? Go put your guitar case out, strum away for a while, people put euros in your guitar case.

Rowan Mangan: But when you think about it, I look at those things and those adventures of mine and I think, Kyrgyzstan, cold fingers. I think, busking in Ireland, cold fingers. Music festivals, foot fungus.

Martha Beck: Oh, ew.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah, I didn't have cold fingers at those festivals, but-

Martha Beck: Daring adventure.

Rowan Mangan: Very daring. So, these things can look different.

Martha Beck: But they didn't scintillate you. They didn't light you up in the way that wild things get lit up by their-

Rowan Mangan: Truth.

Martha Beck: Yeah.

Rowan Mangan: That is very well put.

Martha Beck: Yeah.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah.

Martha Beck: So, that's consensus now. Talk about our senses.



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- Rowan Mangan: So, what we're trying to say, I guess, in these stories, is this fair, Marty, that you can have these adventures and still be saying, "Is this as good as it gets? It should be but is it?"?
- Martha Beck: Right. And if you don't... if you're feeling it, then stay with it. But if you're not feeling it, if you've got that wild thing inside of you going, "Maybe there's something more," it may be that the adventures you've been creating, even the wild adventures, are cultural artifacts that you learned from movies and from TV. And they're not as fulfilling as you'd hoped they would be. I was so disappointed when it didn't ever fill up that sort of emptiness inside. And I remember watching Saturday Night Live once and it was a bunch of New York women in a bar or they were meeting for lunch. And every one of them was like, "I'm so tired of advertising. I think I'll just, I don't know, open a blueberry muffin shop in Maine." And then the next person would be, "I know, television production is such a drag. I think I'm just going to open a bakery in Maine somewhere." They all wanted to open a bakery in Maine. And then one of them actually did it and the others beat her to death or something for actually doing it.
- Rowan Mangan: Can I just ask a question, as a side note?
- Martha Beck: Sure.
- Rowan Mangan: Because this is me as an outsider. I'm just really, really curious, because I've heard Maine, the state of Maine, come up a few times lately. And there's almost like... I feel like, what is Maine for Americans? What does it represent in the American subconscious, in the way that you sort of know, "Oh, California. Yeah, Florida, I'm thinking about that." But what's Maine represent?
- Martha Beck: I think Maine is quaint and quirky. It's seen in this place... it's not in the big cities, but it's Northernly enough not to be one of the dread, Southern bogs. So, it's crispy, and clean, and cold. And the people there are quirky and they speak in short sentences. And they eat enormous amounts of blueberry muffins. There are a lot of blueberries in Maine, I must say. So, I think that's how people feel about it.
- Rowan Mangan: Got it. Okay.
- Martha Beck: Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: And I mean, Stephen King. That's all I've got. I've just got Stephen King.
- Martha Beck: For Stephen King it's just a playground of evil.



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- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, exactly.
- Martha Beck: Blueberry muffins are all being run by ghouls.
- Rowan Mangan: The blueberry muffins are alive.
- Martha Beck: But then there's, if you've read John Krakauer's book, Into Thin Air, about these people who spend a fortune to have people basically drag them up Everest.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh, yeah. This is nuts.
- Martha Beck: And we went up while reporting for Outside Magazine on a year that so many people died on Everest. And he came back and wrote the book while he was still quite raw and angry. And he just said, "It is not worth it. All its about is pain and suffering and you stand on a mountain. But do you really want to lose your limbs over this?" You can feel that in there. And the myth of Everest kind of crumbled in that book. And he was just like, "Live your lives, be happy. Don't spend a fortune on this. It's ridiculous." So, the big adventures that the culture sells us. So, Row, the other day, invented a thing. And I said, "Let's do a podcast on this." And she calls it an Inventure.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah.
- Martha Beck: So, why don't you tell us, Row, but this, to me, is the coming to our senses solution. The cultural predicament is that even our adventures are prescribed. And the coming to our senses is to make life a daring Inventure. So, tell us what an Inventure is.
- Rowan Mangan: An Inventure. So, it's essentially an adventure, but it's not prescribed by culture. That's the easy way into it. But it's about, the way that the word works is in, invent, venture. Inventure. And that's the whole thing.
- Martha Beck: [inaudible 00:38:20].



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- Rowan Mangan: [inaudible 00:38:21]. And but the in, and then invent. It's almost like a breath. In, you stop. You put the magazine down. The culture's magazine picture of what an adventure is or what a life is. In. And then, on the out breath, invent. So, don't take it. Don't even make your vision board out of magazine images. Just draw it from scratch, because it's in the spirit of invention that we can really make something that we know is new. Because I think one of the tricky things with this stuff is you have to get really honest with yourself to know if what you're longing for or aspiring to, is cultural or truly yourself. We're really trained hard into going with the culture and aspiring to that. And so, it's quite a process sometimes, to find our way back to our own wild self. So yeah, this is Inventures. Wild Inventures. My new side hustle is called Wild Inventures and it is about this and how it works. Not just in terms of the adventure-sized aspects of our lives, but I want to think about how we live in-venturously day to day, minute to minute. So-
- Martha Beck: It's very, very exciting. I've been... I have had front row seats to the invention process of the Inventures and it's very exciting. It's a massively interesting and clever way to come out of the cultural strictures and get back to your real nature. And to go back to Helen Keller saying, "Life is a daring adventure or nothing," she also, the next words out of her hand were-
- Rowan Mangan: Sorry. That's [inaudible 00:40:21].
- Martha Beck: She said, "Security does not exist in nature." So, the first thing I did when I was listening to Row talk about Inventure is say, "Where's the edge of my security?" Because we feel secure within the bonds of culture.
- Rowan Mangan: Right.
- Martha Beck: But it's when you get to the edge of, "Oh, people aren't going to like this, but it's true to my heart," which we talked about with the whole throupleness. Our whole daily life, our relationship is like this. And it's scary. And that's kind of how you know where the edge is. Because being a little bit scared is actually the way we get fulfilled. The positive psychologists have found that on the edge of insecurity, where we're trying to push back the boundaries a little and live according to something that scares us just a bit, that's where we enter flow and joy and happiness. And then it's, you start to develop, as we've talked about this, this process of going in and seeing what excites me and still feels a little frightening?
- Rowan Mangan: Oh yeah.



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- Martha Beck: That's the in. That's what you're going and look for, into the mind of the self. You go looking for the jewels and then you say, "Okay, well, what can I make from that? What can I invent?" And then you, by glory, make that happen. Yes, you do.
- Rowan Mangan: I am taking notes. This is the nice thing about getting to hang out with Marty all the time, is that you have an idea and then she just says 4,000 amazing things about it and you get to write it down. And I mean, I think what's so interesting about the, "Is it frightening" idea, is really Maine and Stephen King. Is it frightening? Because that's what Stephen King asks himself, and that's why-
- Martha Beck: Right.
- Rowan Mangan: No, sorry. I'm trying to reiterate.
- Martha Beck: "Is it interesting? Is it scary? I'll write a book about it." "Is it interesting? Is it scary? I'll live a life about it." That's an adventure.
- Rowan Mangan: Is it interesting? Is it scary? Is it a clown in a drain?
- Martha Beck: With a muffin? A clown in a drain that runs a blueberry muffin shop?
- Rowan Mangan: "All our muffins float down here."
- Martha Beck: Oh, boy. Now we're getting into territory we don't even want to touch.
- Rowan Mangan: No, you're right.
- Martha Beck: So to speak.
- Rowan Mangan: As it were. And so, I guess what all that brings us to is that life is either a wild Inventure or nothing, Marty.
- Martha Beck: And that's when you discover how good it can get, when you start to live your life as a wild Inventure. And we speak from experience, yes?
- Rowan Mangan: Yes.
- Martha Beck: So, let's give the folks some real world examples from our own lives, because what else is interesting to us? Nothing.



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- Rowan Mangan: Nothing. Nothing, darling. Yeah, so okay, so for me, the first one that pops up is parenting. Inventions in parenting. Because holy m'fing crap. There are a lot of cultural knives around parenting. All this mommy wars kind of stuff. It is gnarly out there. And there is so much judgment. And it's so weird. And I didn't realize just how intense it was until I was in the thick of it. And-
- Martha Beck: Tell them what you mean. Because I'm a mother and I don't even know what the mommy wars are.
- Rowan Mangan: Okay, so it's all about different... I guess the kind way to say it would be different schools of how to parent. Whether you've got people who talk about attachment parenting, or people who talk... so any little thing, like, "Oh, my baby won't go to sleep." Get ready for the mommy wars.
- Martha Beck: Really?
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, because you should never put your child down. When your child is crying, they're communicating need to you. If you abandon them or, da-da-da-da-da. Or you have to put them down and let them cry.
- Martha Beck: Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: That's how they learn blah, blah, blah. Anyway, and that's just one example. And it's so hard, because with other stuff in my life, before I was a mom, there's just the sense that the worst that can happen is I mess myself up. And that's really different sense of the stakes than worst that can happen is I mess this child up. And you better believe that all the big players in the mommy wars are going to tell you, "Don't do it my way, and your child is for sure going to be-"
- Martha Beck: Dead in a gutter by the age of 15, basically. Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah.
- Martha Beck: So, that checks the scary box. How do you do the Invention part?
- Rowan Mangan: So, okay. For me, part of the invention part of Invention is that I like to gather a lot of information. And that's not everyone's way. So, first of all, the in is I get still. Everything's got to start with that, right? In. Go in, see what's up, see what's there. And then, I begin the invention process, for me... not for everyone, but for me, it involves learning stuff and then measuring it against how I feel. Just literally, how does that make me feel? Good or bad? Your coaching method. You talk about free and less free.



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- Martha Beck: Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: And all of these are the same sort of tools towards feeling your way towards your own individual truth. And if it corresponds exactly with one particular dogma or school of thought, it's probably not really yours.
- Martha Beck: That's really interesting, because I raised a small posse of other people before Lila came along. And if I look back, the times when I tried to follow the culture, I regret. I so regret it, putting that kind of pressure on a kid. But when it was my nature... like, trying to cook Christmas cookies with them every Christmas. I'd be like, "Get in here and make the Christmas cookies. It's an important part of childhood." Especially if you're a straight Mormon woman.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. Right.
- Martha Beck: And then, but what I remember most fondly is when there was no food in the kitchen. There was just oil paint and we all sat around drawing. Because that was my nature, and it turned out that they liked it too.
- Rowan Mangan: So, what about you, Marty? Where are you looking at in-venturous living?
- Martha Beck: I was kind of forced into in-venturous living around work, because I couldn't hold a job. From early on, I had a lot of autoimmune diseases, I had these three little kids. I just wasn't able, physically or emotionally able to get a normal job. So, what I've done my whole life is think, "Let's see. What do I do that someone might pay me to do? Oh, I just learned how to bend spoons with my mind." Well, I use my hands, as well. But you can bend spoons with your mind, and people have paid me to teach them to do that. So, and it's really cool, but it's very scary living.
- Rowan Mangan: Ring, ring. Ring, ring. "Hello, Martha Beck, spoon bending? Yeah, I got some spoons here and they're just so straight. I don't know what I can do with them, but I would sure love to pay someone to bend them."
- Martha Beck: No, it's just... the spoon bending is not the point. You can get your spoons bent professionally. You don't need to pay me to do it with my mind. But the Inventure has been, "Oh my god, I've got to pay the mortgage. I can't do a job. What can I do?" So, I go to my-
- Rowan Mangan: "I can bend a spoon."



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- Martha Beck: Yes, this is what I'm saying. It does not sound normal.
- Rowan Mangan: I know. And I am right there with you, but you have to admit, it is rich with comedy potential.
- Martha Beck: All right, if you say so. To me it was a living. To you it's comedy. Okay? But you know how we met? Because I decided, okay, I'm obsessed with saving the world. I love going on safari in Africa. I do this life coaching stuff and maybe people will pay to come with me and do all that at once?
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah.
- Martha Beck: And they did.
- Rowan Mangan: And they did.
- Martha Beck: They did. They came. And I'll keep doing it. And it is called, The African Self-Transformation Adventure Retreat, or STAR. But we're thinking of changing it to the Self-Transformation Inventure Retreat, or?
- Rowan Mangan: STIR.
- Martha Beck: Oh, it'll stir you up, folks.
- Rowan Mangan: It'll stir you right up. And I was explaining to Marty, because we got into the whole shaken not stirred, obvious sort of digression there. But I was explaining to Marty that when James Bond says, "Shaken, not stirred." That's like... when you shake... unless I'm misunderstanding... when you shake a cocktail, you're shaking it in ice and watering that cocktail down. If you stir it, that's a stronger cocktail. So I'm just saying, what he's asking for, in his debonair way, is, "I'd like a drink that sounds really butch, but could you just water it down a bit?"
- Martha Beck: He's going for an adventure drink by the culture standards. But an Inventure drink is, "I want that thing stirred, no ice, poured straight down my throat."
- Rowan Mangan: Just pour it into a syringe and inject it into my eyeballs, because I'm a real man.
- Martha Beck: Okay.
- Rowan Mangan: Okay. So, for other people, they could be looking at Inventures in personal hygiene, for instance.



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Martha Beck: Sounds scary. Insect management.

Rowan Mangan: Inventure in insect management.

Martha Beck: Got to do it.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah, or Inventures in health, right?

Martha Beck: Yeah, or in retirement, what are you going to do with your life?

Rowan Mangan: Retiring Inventurously.

Martha Beck: Oh, yeah.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah, I love it.

Martha Beck: Or your living space. There's a whole network of tiny houses that just got me going the other day.

Rowan Mangan: If I had a network of tiny houses, I'd still them all together and cut out the walls in between them-

Martha Beck: And make an enormous house?

Rowan Mangan: Or maybe just a really long corridor. So, I would love-

Martha Beck: Oh, what an Inventure.

Rowan Mangan: I would love to hear from you all about where you're having Inventures. You can write to me once you join my mailing list. Or follow me on Instagram. All those things.

Martha Beck: Or go to Wild Inventures and join the mailing list for Wild Inventures at rowanmangan.com. Did you already say that?

Rowan Mangan: You can't go to Wild Inventures, because there's no such place. But you can go to Rowanmagan.com and sign up for the Wild Inventures mailing list.

Martha Beck: I just decided... I went within and decided that there should be a Wild Inventures mailing list, but just for myself, because that's my Inventure.

Rowan Mangan: No, there is a Wild Inventures mailing list.



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Martha Beck: Oh. I'm going to try to learn to go to the inter-web and learn a thing. Because for me, that is crazy scary and way out there. Yeah.

Rowan Mangan: Oh, it's good times. It's good times. I hope you all have lots of wonderful Inventures. And I hope you enjoyed the podcast, and don't forget, stay wild.

Martha Beck: Stay wild.

Rowan Mangan: We hope you're enjoying Bewildered. If you're in the USA and want to be notified when a new episode comes out, text the word 'wild' to 570-873-0144. For more of us, Martha's on Instagram, [themarhabeck](#). She's on Facebook, [The Martha Beck](#), and she's on Twitter, [marthabeck](#). Her website is [Marthabeck.com](#). And me, I too, am on Instagram. [Rowan_Mangan](#). I'm on Facebook as [Rowan Mangan](#). And I'm on Twitter as [RowanMangan](#). Bewildered is produced by Scott Foster with support from the brilliant team at MBI.