



# BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK  
AND ROWAN MANGAN

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## Episode #31: A Space for Dreaming

*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 feeling 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] Hi, I'm Martha Beck!
- Rowan Mangan: And I'm Rowan Mangan, and this is another episode of Bewildered, the podcast for people trying to figure it out. What are you trying to figure out this time, Marty?
- Martha Beck: Oh, I am trying to figure out a lifelong issue. It is about making casual friends.
- Rowan Mangan: Casual friends.
- Martha Beck: Yes. I lack this ability.
- Rowan Mangan: Say more.
- Martha Beck: Well, I used to just have no friends because I'm weird and nerdy and generally abhorrent.
- Rowan Mangan: Very cute, though.
- Martha Beck: You know, for you, abhorrent is the new cute.
- Rowan Mangan: That makes me happy.



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- Martha Beck: So I was just like, I literally, with junior high school, I remember creating a place for myself under a table I stacked all these boxes around, and the other kids wrote Nirvana or Godzilla's retreat or whatever on the boxes. I literally was walling myself off from people. Then I decided, "Okay, I have to learn to make friends." So, how do you do that? And I would read. You pay attention to what people say. You reflect what they're saying. You ask them questions. And boy, did I go for it. And as a result, I act incredibly interested in people I want as casual acquaintances, and in most situations this is okay. But I specifically have problems, like for many years, as you know all too well, I cut my own hair-
- Rowan Mangan: Oh, yeah.
- Martha Beck: ... with a pair of scissors from a sewing kit that you could take on an airplane.
- Rowan Mangan: This is true.
- Martha Beck: It was not a good look. But the reason was every time someone else cut my hair, they would end up feeling like they were really, really good friends with me.
- Rowan Mangan: So the problem is that you are an overachiever in every part of your life and you don't know how to regular achieve. You can only-
- Martha Beck: Yeah. I don't know how to regular achieve. And that's why I finally... Like, coaching is amazing for me, because I really have that skill. I really listen. I'm really interested. I really want to fix people's lives, but that's the only gear I've got. It's Godzilla's retreat or I'm moving into your house to fix your life.
- Rowan Mangan: Mm. Interesting.
- Martha Beck: At least I'm leading you to believe that.
- Rowan Mangan: Interesting.
- Martha Beck: I don't know how to do in-between. You do in-between. How do you do in-between?
- Rowan Mangan: I don't know. I'm just wondering. I did talk you into finally going and getting your hair cut by, sorry to say it, but a professional. The one area in which Martha doesn't overachieve in her life is cutting her own hair, I'm sorry to say.
- Martha Beck: The back, you know. The back was not good.



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- Rowan Mangan: The back was-
- Martha Beck: So I've been told.
- Rowan Mangan: Mm-mm. Let's just say, it didn't not look like you cut it yourself blindly with a pair of tiny scissors from a sewing kit. It didn't not look like that.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. It wasn't. And I don't know, personally, I feel really good about it, but because it's the one thing I've never been able to see. But I know Karen for years was begging me to get a regular haircut and then you piled on and you're pushier than she is.
- Rowan Mangan: Mm-hmm.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. But it's like, how do you do it? I don't get it. Actually it's because I just read this great book by Katherine May. I wish I knew the title of the book. It'll come to me in a while. I either remember the author of the title. Anyway-
- Rowan Mangan: It's not out yet.
- Martha Beck: This one is.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh.
- Martha Beck: I'm reading Katherine May's next book, but I didn't know her last one. So I went and... Anyway, she's this brilliant writer who started to suspect in her 30s that she might be on the autism spectrum. And it turned out when she was tested that she was really, really seriously on the autism spectrum. So she had the same problem I do, and I actually took the test and it said I'm slightly on the spectrum. So she would either just run away from people completely, or she figured out how to be socially appropriate so well that she was considered the life of every party while she was dying inside to just get away. I identified very strongly with this.
- Rowan Mangan: And working very hard as well.
- Martha Beck: Oh, my gosh. It's exhausting.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah.
- Martha Beck: And then you have to go lie down and have a minor convulsion for, I don't know, three days.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah.



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- Martha Beck: You're not giving me any help here, Rowie.
- Rowan Mangan: Well, it's not entirely unfamiliar to me. But I don't know. It's so interesting, all the diagnoses and classifications and everything, because that to me is what I have thought of as being an introvert, is I can do it but it takes all my energy and then I do need a long time to recharge. So, I don't know.
- Martha Beck: Well, I don't even know how to do this, except that I want to tell you that the name of the book is The Electricity of Every Living Thing.
- Rowan Mangan: That's what you were typing, you sneaky little girl.
- Martha Beck: Yes, I was typing, right? I was doing this as we speak. And this is what I'm always trying to do when I'm talking to people. In my head, I'm thinking, "Let's see, what's the next paragraph of my next book?" It's a little private brain space. It's not fair to others and I'm not saying it's right. That's why I'm trying desperately to figure it out.
- Rowan Mangan: So tell me what would a casual acquaintanceship look like?
- Martha Beck: Whoa, like you seem to have friends in Australia and you'll say, "Oh, yeah, I was talking to my friend online the other day." And I'm like, "What? What? When did you take six hours to go write a deep, meaningful, personal letter to your friend?" Because I didn't see it happen.
- Rowan Mangan: Okay. Yeah. I can see what we're doing.
- Martha Beck: I don't know what you're doing.
- Rowan Mangan: Mm. Well, let me tell you.
- Martha Beck: Please.
- Rowan Mangan: I don't know if this is something to do with... No. Who knows what it's to do? This is me... Like when I say to Marty, "Oh, I was chatting with them online," this is what it actually looked like. They've shared a meme. I go, "Ha ha. That is so true." And they're like, "I know, right?" And there we are. We've caught up. You can not just... This is Martha replying to... Say I had sent her that she had posted a meme. Imagine a parallel universe in which that would happen. And then imagine that I see it and reply, "Ha ha, that is so true." This would be Martha's reply, and it would come six months later. "Dearest Rowie Joey, as I sit here reflecting on our life together, I see that the leaves are beginning to turn from green to yellow and it reminds me of time's inevitable passing..."



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- Martha Beck: But, no, that would make me disgusting and people wouldn't want to come back. This is how I experience it. I put a meme up. They say, "That is so true." And I say, "Ha ha. Yes it is," because I'm trying to be like you. And then they write, "When are you get... Where..." Okay, let me give you an actual example.
- Rowan Mangan: Go ahead.
- Martha Beck: This is literally true. When I lived in Phoenix, I used to be on the news on one of the local news channels. Once a week I would go in. People would write in questions and I would answer them. I would do a little life coachy thing. So there was a woman there who I'm hoping is now deceased because-
- Rowan Mangan: Jesus.
- Martha Beck: ... I'm afraid she'll hear this and know who she is.
- Rowan Mangan: You shouldn't wish someone dead.
- Martha Beck: No, I just [inaudible 00:08:07]-
- Rowan Mangan: ... just in case they listen to your podcast. You should consider... Like, this is part of the problem. I hope she's dead because she might listen to my podcast. I can see that's more on the Nirvana-
- Martha Beck: Yeah, that's not even a marketing vibe, either.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. No, I think we're starting to dig into the root of the problem.
- Martha Beck: Let me put it this way. She is fully enlightened and nothing can offend her.
- Rowan Mangan: There you go.
- Martha Beck: Okay. The fact is no one at the TV station liked her and everyone was afraid of her. She was one of the video editors in the back and I used to go in and I'd wait for my segment in the back with all the electronics dudes, and we were all close friends. I knew the names of their kids. I knew when they were going on vacation. I knew what diseases they had. I mean, I applied my trade.
- Rowan Mangan: I see.



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Martha Beck: Okay. But this one woman was so nasty nobody ever dared talk to her. And so I decided I was going to just ignore the hostility radiating off her with little cartoon visible little waves of animosity. And I would say to her, "How you doing?" And she'd go, like, "Why would you ask?" And I'd say, "I just think you're looking great today. That sweater looks great on you." Whatever. So this went on and she was always nasty and I was always nice. And then one day I went in and I said, "How are you?" And she goes, "Why would you ask?" And I said, "Just wondering." And she said, and I quote, "We should go on vacation together." I'm not lying.

Rowan Mangan: So let me get this straight.

Martha Beck: Yeah.

Rowan Mangan: How are you? Why would you ask? Because that sweater looks good on you?

Martha Beck: I don't know. I just was randomly grasping at things. This is the thing. I'm not actually good with... I'm not actually a good person, but people get the impression that I am so connected to them that we should go on vacation together.

Rowan Mangan: So how was it? Where'd you go? Club Med?

Martha Beck: We went out into the desert and we just lay there baking in the 120 degree heat until she let me go off my leash and I went home.

Rowan Mangan: Because this is the thing, is that part of it is that you would've gone on vacation with her.

Martha Beck: I remember my last haircut was in Phoenix and it was by my very gay hair stylist. And he had introduced me to his boyfriend the month before I went in the next month, because when your hair is short you got to cut it frequently. And he goes, "Yeah, now that I'm not gay anymore, I'm really considering a new way of life." And I was like, "Wait a second. I met your boyfriend last month." And he goes, "Ugh, I have not been gay for so long." And I was like, "Well, four weeks." And I said, "Well, what's wrong with being gay?" And he said, "Oh, no, I truly believe gay people literally burn in hell." And I said, "You really think there's a place for gay people? Like a physical place that is roasting hot where gay people go to be roasted over flames?" And he was like, "Absolutely. When are you coming to my pool party?" Never got my haircut by a professional again for 30 years.

Rowan Mangan: No, I can really see why.



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Martha Beck: You're not-

Rowan Mangan: I'm speechless.

Martha Beck: I have no conclusion. Let's just ask Rowie what she is trying to figure out, because I am not making progress here.

Rowan Mangan: It's actually not unrelated, and my hands are sweating because this is legit, Marty. I am trying to figure this out right now. It is what it is.

Martha Beck: Okay. I'm hearing you.

Rowan Mangan: Something happened to us, probably about six weeks ago.

Martha Beck: Oh, yeah.

Rowan Mangan: Eight weeks ago? I don't know. And it was one of those things that doesn't feel terrible at the time, but then you realize later that it was a terrible thing and you should have known and you should have remembered from past... So anyway, we got invited to a party.

Martha Beck: Oh, God.

Rowan Mangan: I know. I know. And now we're at that point where it's happening, see? And we remembered that we are scared of parties and hate them.

Martha Beck: Yeah.

Rowan Mangan: And I'm not... To me, I'm kind of... I get to go there with Marty, and so that's nice because-

Martha Beck: Yeah. I'll be hiding behind you.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah. Until you see someone, and then you'll be like, "That sweater looks amazing. Where's your boyfriend?" Blah, blah, and all those things.

Martha Beck: All those things.

Rowan Mangan: And you'll go into your gear because that's the thing is, I don't know that I have that gear quite as intensively as you because of the overachieving.

Martha Beck: I'm afraid of that gear.



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- Rowan Mangan: So we are going to probably be in this weird contortion of each trying to hide behind the other, I guess.
- Martha Beck: It will be amazing.
- Rowan Mangan: But for me, what it's really come down to is, I don't know what to wear to the party because I've been in my house for three years. And during that time I've changed size a lot, and in two different directions. Suppose three, if you think about it in a linear way.
- Martha Beck: First the left side was changing, then the right side was changing.
- Rowan Mangan: So I've got... And it's all in-between stuff, and I literally, this is literally true, don't have anything to wear to the party. And also it's someone that I don't necessarily know that well, and I'm really scared everyone's going to be super dressy.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. Oh, I'm scared, too. Or, yeah, they'll be naked. I've been to parties where people started getting naked. That's not happening.
- Rowan Mangan: I start that at parties. It's such a relief after the worry about high heels.
- Martha Beck: Now you know what to wear.
- Rowan Mangan: I mean, I will be wearing Birkenstocks. There's no two ways about it. I'm just scared of that minute where the eyes flick down to the Birkenstocks and then back up.
- Martha Beck: The entire re-evaluation of your personality. I once went to a party, it was an Oprah thing, and it was at this retreat in the countryside and the women were wearing such ridiculous shoes that they had to have butlers carry them from place to place so that they could... They'd have to take off their shoes and walk barefoot, but that wasn't distinguished enough, so they just stood there in these spiky heels and there would be like a mountainous terrain.
- Rowan Mangan: There's a word for the thing that I'm thinking of and I can never remember, and I always ask you. It's a word that is also another kind of word. Like it means something else as well, but it's what I picture these ladies being carried upon.
- Martha Beck: Oh, a palanquin.
- Rowan Mangan: No, that's not... Maybe that's the thing, but there's another word.



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- Martha Beck: I pronounced it palanquin for a long time.
- Rowan Mangan: No.
- Martha Beck: A litter?
- Rowan Mangan: Yes.
- Martha Beck: Oh.
- Rowan Mangan: Is that what you call it? Like where there's a bed being carried around by people?
- Martha Beck: Yeah, yeah, yeah. We'll put it on the litter.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. That's the word. That would be so sweet, in their shoes. I love how you're being super relatable today, Marty. It's like when you go and you're being on TV for your weekly segment and that producer down the back who's really rude, and you're like, "You know when you go to an Oprah party? Our women have to be carried around on litters because their shoes are so fancy."
- Martha Beck: When you put it that way, I mean, my life is so drab from the inside, I can't tell you. The best part of the TV gig, of years of doing this, was that one day a zookeeper brought in a kinkajou. Which is, I don't even know, it's a weasel or something. And the kinkajou got loose in the studio, which is, you know, it's no windows. It's absolutely dark like a cave with wires and cameras and lights everywhere.
- Rowan Mangan: I love this story so much.
- Martha Beck: And I was wearing high heels. I used to wear those, that's why I needed foot surgery. Don't do it. And like a business suit, which is really appropriate for 120 degrees. But inside the studio, it was cool. The kinkajou got loose and everybody was like, "Oh, my God, the kinkajou is loose in the TV studio." And I saw the kinkajou going past in a break between the wires, and I thought, "It is now or never, baby." And I launched myself, hands out, like an American football player. You wouldn't understand. And I did grasp the kinkajou. I conquered my fear. I grasped him and I said, "I've got him. I've got him." And then all the people in the studio, whose diseases I knew, had to pull me backwards so that my skirt hiked up, with my little high heels, so that we could get me out of the space with the kinkajou still in my grasp. It was the finest moment of my life.
- Rowan Mangan: I am so happy that that happened so that we still have a story to tell.



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- Martha Beck: Yeah. And then, that's, I think, much more relatable.
- Rowan Mangan: Hey, but what about when we had a very similar thing happen not long ago on our own patio with a little Mr. Toad.
- Martha Beck: I know, but I was afraid of him a little bit.
- Rowan Mangan: Why do you think you were afraid of him?
- Martha Beck: I don't know. I think if I don't do something for about a day, I get afraid of it.
- Rowan Mangan: I feel like I have this thing with certain animals and the way they move, where I still... I don't have long hair anymore, but I used to have very long hair for a long time and, oh, I don't want to go into the whole therapy thing, but I have a thing about something that is going to move erratically, either going down my front-
- Martha Beck: Or in your hair.
- Rowan Mangan: ... or getting stuck in my hair.
- Martha Beck: Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: Well, that's one of my dark corners of my psyche, but it should be a great party. This is [inaudible 00:18:14]-
- Martha Beck: Yeah, on to the party. I just hope somebody brings a freaking kinkajou.
- Rowan Mangan: Well, I mean, if the worse happens, you can tell the kinkajou story.
- Martha Beck: Okay. And you can always get naked. Since you're the one who usually starts that.
- Rowan Mangan: I always do.
- Martha Beck: No, you're always naked under all those clothes. So, yeah. If we run out of things to do, and we're just like rabbits in the headlights just staring at the people. We don't know what to wear. We wore the wrong thing. We don't know what to do. Just strip.



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- Rowan Mangan: Or, this is what I've learned, "That sweater looks really good on you." But with a slight note of surprise. That sweater... Maybe what we should do is come looking really daggy, only the Aussies will know what that means. Really daggy and like lesbian. Sorry, lesbians, I know. But like the Birkenstocks and the jeans and the shirt and the no bra. So we just turn up like that.
- Martha Beck: And the tool belt-
- Rowan Mangan: But what we should do is turn up and immediately start really loudly judging what everyone else is wearing.
- Martha Beck: Oh.
- Rowan Mangan: Wouldn't that be fun?
- Martha Beck: That's the way to stop making close friends.
- Rowan Mangan: They will not want to go on vacation with us.
- Martha Beck: No.
- Rowan Mangan: I think that's brilliant.
- Martha Beck: I think we've figured that out, actually.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. I think we're done here, but we have a Karenism, our new item.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. Our new item, Karenism of the podcast. And I have it this time because I just got back from a lengthy trip to South Africa and all kinds of things happened in my absence, and people became unrecognizable to me. I came in and they were like, "Who are you? And why are you naked?" And I was like, "I'm trying to make friends at a party." And they said, "Oh, we remember you." And they said, "We've been watching a show. It's amazing. It's called The Staircase. You have to watch it." And they kept talking about it. And I was like, "Well, wait, wait, wait, wait, tell me what's happened."
- Rowan Mangan: If you are someone who cares about spoilers and really wants to watch The Staircase, either the documentary that was made many years ago so there is a sort of statute of limitations thing there, or the recent show with Toni Colette and Colin Firth. If you care about things that aren't really spoilers, turn off now.



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Martha Beck: Okay. I'm not sure that this will be a spoiler because Karen undertook the task of explaining the show to me. And this was the way it went. "So here's the thing, Marty. They found her at the bottom of the stairs. There was blood everywhere. Not spray, like with an object, but blood everywhere. And there was blood outside." And I said, "Wait, wait, wait, someone fell down the stairs and somehow the blood from this got outside?" And she goes, "Yeah. It's like, until the end... There's always the owl theory, but really they've never seen wounding like that." And I was like, "Wait, wait, what? An owl?" She's like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. She had to go outside because... And then maybe the owl."

And I was like, "Wait, she fell down the... She went downstairs..." And she said, "Well, there were two holiday deer. You've got to understand. There were two holiday deer outside." And I'm like, "She was chasing deer in her yard? And then like an owl got her?" And Karen's like, "Yes. But, 10 years later, another man that he had had sex with who had sex with another man that he'd also had sex with, had the same owl wounds." And I was like, "Who had sex with what?" And I mean, this was the explanation I got. She rested her case at this point. She'd made her case to the jury and I was supposed to do what I wanted with that sort of facts.

Rowan Mangan: But everyone who's watched it will... What's amazing to me is that you just did a perfect... Like, that was perfect. This isn't a Karenism. This is perfect. Everything you said just makes total sense to me.

Martha Beck: I was so confused.

Rowan Mangan: But you remembered it brilliantly. Yeah. Yeah, no, I followed it. I just feel like watching it again now. This is so fascinating. There was no skull fracture and no one had ever been so badly beaten without their skull fracturing. So obviously they think the owl, but then someone else had the same thing and there was a connection. But the weird thing is, there was another woman 10 years ago. And guess what happened to her?

Martha Beck: She was attacked by a holiday deer.

Rowan Mangan: At the bottom of a staircase.

Martha Beck: So it is very fascinating, but I have no freaking clue. And this is the way Karen explains everything, including the congressional hearings. And like, she's very excited and she knows it backwards and forwards, but the way she tells it is just word salad. Word up here, word down there, word to the left, word to the right. Stand up, sit down, fight, fight, fight. We're done. It's Karen.



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Rowan Mangan: It's a Karenism. (singing)

Martha Beck: Boop, boop, boop.

Rowan Mangan: We'll be right back with more Bewildered. I have a favor to ask. You might not know this, but ratings and reviews are like gold in the podcasting universe. They get podcasts in front of more faces, more eyes, more ears, all the bits that you could have a podcast in front of. That's what they do. So it would help us enormously if you would consider going over to your favorite podcasting app, especially if it's Apple, and giving us a few stars, maybe even five, maybe even six if you can find a way to hack the system, I wouldn't complain. And a review would also be wonderful. We read them all and love them. So thank you very much in advance. Let's just go out there and bewilder the world. Mwah. All right. Marty.

Martha Beck: Yes.

Let's, for God's sake, finally get to the topic of this.

Oh, we have a topic?

Rowan Mangan: Yeah. Yeah.

Martha Beck: Wonderful.

Rowan Mangan: So what we thought we'd talk about today and we're going to talk about it... All right, let's be honest. This is something I'm going through right now and I thought it'd be fun to talk about because I like talking about myself. So we're going to talk about that sort of undefined time between when you in your life have been one thing and you know you're sort of becoming another thing, but you're not there yet and you don't really know what's happening. And I was thinking about it as a kind of space for dreaming, which isn't something that our culture names or allows for.

Martha Beck: Yeah.

Rowan Mangan: Stuff like that.



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- Martha Beck: Yeah. I mean, it's so interesting because everything is supposed to be stable. We're always looking for something stable. We'll go through school, we'll get a job, we'll get a marriage. It'll all be stable. Once I've done all the cultural things and I'm wearing the wedding ring and everything, nothing can change again. But everything's always changing. So a lot of people end up, and this happens to me often and I've seen so many people go through it. The world is changing. They're changing by nature, and we're always talking about what culture says, what nature says, right? Their natural tempo is to change from what they have been into something else. But as you just said, there's no set of concepts or processes or words to describe the letting go of the old self and the undefined time before you become the new self.
- Rowan Mangan: Can you talk about the metaphor that you use in your life coach training and in various places, one of your books, to describe that? Because I love it. I think it's such a great image that we can keep in mind.
- Martha Beck: I say this like nine times a day. It's why I make close friends, because they need this. When a caterpillar is full fed, that's the phrase. They come out and they're a little tiny and they just grow and grow and grow until they reach a status called full fed, which is when there are enough cells, this is so cool, there are exactly enough cells in this caterpillar to make the butterfly it's meant to be.
- Rowan Mangan: Wow.
- Martha Beck: And at that point, boom, without adding another cell, the caterpillar makes a chrysalis or cocoon, which hardens into the chrysalis. And then with many species of caterpillar, it simply melts into an undifferentiated goop.
- Rowan Mangan: Right?
- Martha Beck: Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: It just melts into a thing, and so it does that and that's where we're like, "Oh, my God, my life is falling apart." We all know that bit. That's not what we're talking about today. Say what happens next.
- Martha Beck: Oh, when the whole thing is completely disaggregated, it triggers a chemical reaction that activates the part of the beast's DNA that says... It's called an imago cell. It has the image of a butterfly built into it, and it turns it on and it takes all those cells and makes a perfect butterfly. Crazy.



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Rowan Mangan: It's absolutely amazing.

Martha Beck: All inside this little container. You'd have no idea what's going on in there.

Rowan Mangan: Liquid to a different animal, all in one process. It's absolutely wild. But I think what's interesting for us as people is, and bearing in mind, it's a metaphor and no one's going to turn into literal goo. It's a metaphor, people, is that the caterpillar is always going to be a butterfly. And what we are talking about is the kinds of change that we go through in identity and stuff that, A, it's not always visible, like being a butterfly. It often doesn't have a name like a butterfly. So we're not just talking about your job or your career or your marital status or even gender and those sorts of things and transitions there. We're talking about the stuff that can actually be quite internal. Yeah.

Martha Beck: And it's really hard to get an individual perspective on the dissolution process and then the recreation process if you only have the cultural models inside you, because the culture says, there's a menu of things you can be. Here's the menu of genders you can be. Boy. Girl. Take your pick. And now it turns out a lot of people don't want to take that pick. They're different genders. There are many genders, and the in-between place is very uncomfortable and people are trying to get identity politics lined up so they have language for it. But basically the culture says, at any point in your life, if you don't like your job, jump to a job that the culture made. If you're not going to be a dancer, be a doctor. So, jump to something else on the menu, and then people want to grab something that's on the menu so they can become that. But that may not be what their nature is wanting them to become.

Rowan Mangan: Exactly. And we are actually taught that being undefined is something to be feared, right? So what we end up doing is trying to make it a version of the culture's menu. Here are the number of things you can be. And so we're like, "Well, I'm kind of like a..."



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- Martha Beck: Yeah. I'm reading this book about a child prodigy violinist. Her name is Min Kym, and it's about how she lost her violin. She lost her violin at a certain point and thought, "Well, maybe I could be a doctor." like she would have had to jump completely to a different self. And people are like that. We want to be like the cultural version, even if a little bit different. Like when I came out as gay years and years ago, decades ago, and I looked around at the other lesbian women I knew, they were always... Well, it looked like, maybe it wasn't on the inside, but they were trying to look like a sort of Leave It To Beaver nuclear family, 1950s American family. Look, we're okay. Like there would be the lipstick lesbian, and then there would be the bad one who was more masculine and made more of the money and whatever. And it was like, "Don't hurt us. We're almost exactly like you." I don't think I'm exactly like that at all.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, isn't that interesting? And I feel like there's something grammatical about it, like the "I'm a..." I'm a noun, and we're never nouns. We're always verbs, right? Because it's not ever this final destination of a thing. And it's so interesting having Lila, our toddler, and feeling the culture come through me in that. And all of us, we all do it, all three of us. As we are raising her, we find ourselves having these conversations of, "Oh, she likes this. Maybe she'll be a..." You know that thing that-
- Martha Beck: Right.
- Rowan Mangan: ... it's so obvious it's almost not worth saying, but it's so subtle the ways that we play out the culture. That, "Oh, he likes building things with blocks. He'll be an engineer. Oh, look, she's doing that with her dolly," and I'm using those genders deliberately. "She'll be a nurse." It's just like childhood is an undefined time and we rush to put a little label on them. There is a fear there, right?
- Martha Beck: Absolutely. I have two follow-ups on that.
- Rowan Mangan: Great.
- Martha Beck: The first one is that, I just said, we are not all Leave It To Beaver lesbians, and you go, "Yeah. Like the way the three of us are raising our baby." That right there is something that we're like completely saying, "What about it?" And other people are like, "Wait. Three?" Yeah. Three.
- Rowan Mangan: Leave that to Beaver.
- Martha Beck: Oh, we could go down a road that would not be appropriate for young children.



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- Rowan Mangan: I think everyone's there with us right now. Thanks, guys.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. I think that... Yeah, yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: Just leave it. Just leave it.
- Martha Beck: And the other point is, I want to know, and this is probably doing exactly the same thing, wanting to identify something that is not identifiable, but when you said we're all a verb, we're not a noun, I was like, "Oh, what verb are you? What verb are you? What verb am I?" And I was like, "I never thought of myself as a verb." Like I'm thinking right now, "What would I define myself as if I had to call myself a verb?" What would you do?
- Rowan Mangan: This is a noun, but I'm thinking about a Suzanne Vega song, which is called Small Blue Thing, and it goes, "Today I am a small blue thing, like a marble or an eye." And it goes through and it never says what the thing is, but there's all these different permutations and there's just this sense of a small blue thing. And it could be like any of these other things. And I feel like that's closer because I am a... Oh, I can't do this.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. It's hard. I can't do it either. The only things that are coming to my mind are images of water flowing. Like, I am a trickle. That sounds slightly like scatological. I am a tinkle. I am a tinkle from the loins of God.
- Rowan Mangan: I... No. Stop it. Stop right now, Mangan. All right.
- Martha Beck: Oh, don't stop. The point is, you are going through this right now, whatever verby thing you are.
- Rowan Mangan: I just want to say something.
- Martha Beck: Yes.
- Rowan Mangan: Verb is a noun. And that was what... So I let myself down right out of the gate there.
- Martha Beck: But that's so confusing. My brain hurts right now.
- Rowan Mangan: I know.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. Language. It's a cultural thing. It's working for the man.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh, God, you're so right. Let's never use it.
- Martha Beck: What I really am is a whoo-hoo.



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- Rowan Mangan: This podcast is going to be challenged by our new decision to no longer use language.
- Martha Beck: Podcasting does seem like the wrong medium for [inaudible 00:34:07]. Oh, there are languages in Northern South America where there's no words.
- Rowan Mangan: Can I just say something?
- Martha Beck: Just whistling.
- Rowan Mangan: Can I just say something?
- Martha Beck: Yes, please.
- Rowan Mangan: Just in that moment, I watched your face as that thought popped into your head and you just went completely right into nerd. Your nerd face came on, and this is what your nerd face looks like.
- Martha Beck: It looks like a lion about to savage the neck of its prey.
- Rowan Mangan: Your nerd self is so excited.
- Martha Beck: It's very excitable. It really is. And, yeah, there are people who don't have words. They only have whistling. There are languages that are all music and no words, but there are no people who don't have music. Music came first.
- Rowan Mangan: Love it. I love it.
- Martha Beck: But tell us, Ro, about what you're going through right now. Speak of this.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. Well, I mean, the thing about it, and the reason that I wanted to talk about this today is that all I can tell you is that I have all the symptoms, right? I don't know what part of myself I'm leaving behind. I don't know what I'm becoming, except that it's a verb. A big one.
- Martha Beck: And maybe it's expressed in whistles. We don't know yet.



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- Rowan Mangan: Could be. Yeah. And so, what interests me is that what I've learned from your work is that when we go through these changes, it always looks a certain way, within very broad parameters, but there are these things that you see in your coaching or have done for a long time, that sort of always happens that are our signals of those imago cells, like you were saying, in the goo of the caterpillar to butterfly metamorphosis. And it's like, I feel those imago cells popping and I find myself doing some of the things that you talk about. And it's so exciting. It hasn't got a name. I can't tell you what it is, because it's undefined. But I would be so excited if you could talk about what those symptoms are. And I know I'm just asking you to perform your work, but it's super interesting, at least to me.
- Martha Beck: I like it that. We have so many things that come from the way Adam says things, like, "I like it that." And one thing he always says is, and we say it now in our family, "That makes me happy on the inside."
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah.
- Martha Beck: So speaking of on the inside, a real metamorphosis starts from within. It is not culturally triggered. It can be triggered by events, but what you are meant to become is within you. So I don't go by what people have been, what they may think they want to become. I go by the symptoms they're showing of a metamorphosis, and I will tell you what they are. Yes, I will.
- Rowan Mangan: Do.
- Martha Beck: But the very first one is a curiosity you have not had before. This-
- Rowan Mangan: Ooh.
- Martha Beck: ... this strange feeling of like, "I'm just going to go..." There was a woman who was on the Oprah show once who changed her whole life because she was driving across a bridge in New England and she saw someone rowing a one-man shell on the river. And she became obsessively curious about this process and ended up becoming a rower and rowing across the Pacific or something. I don't know. But she was so bizarrely curious about this thing. When you get that odd curiosity, to me, that's the first symptom. You may not even notice it.
- Rowan Mangan: Can I tell you what one of mine was that popped into my head?
- Martha Beck: Yeah, yeah.



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Rowan Mangan: So I can remember, I don't know, a couple of months ago being in Lila's nursery playing with her and I had a podcast on, a podcast by the brilliant Emma Gannon. It's called The Hyphen. Oh, no, her newsletter's called The Hyphen. The podcast is called Ctrl Alt Delete. So good, you guys, you should listen to it. And I was listening to this one and Emma was interviewing someone from this sort of new media publication kind of model company called Substack. And I was just like that.

You know how it is when you have a podcast on, you just kind of doing your thing, doop-de-do. But I just stopped everything, stopped playing with Lila, and I was just drawn to this... And honestly, it's about like something that's between a blog and a newsletter. It's not the sort of thing that would usually get your heart racing. And I couldn't stop thinking about it. I even signed up for this course that they do and everything about it. And who knows what that's about? Hell, I don't.

Martha Beck: I love the odd curiosity phase. Yeah. The thing that started me as a writer was I was listening to an Indigo Girls song. Didn't know I was gay.

Rowan Mangan: Early signs.

Martha Beck: And it's called Virginia Woolf.

Rowan Mangan: Also gay.

Martha Beck: Also gay. And one of the lines was, "A life of pages waiting to be filled." Oh, and it's like, "There I am on a kind of telephone line through time, and the voice at the other end comes like a long lost friend." And I just burst into tears. And there was so much in me that was starting to metamorphose then, because it's a very gay song and I didn't know I was gay, but that was happening. Virginia Woolf, gay. Indigo Girls, gay. Everyone gay. And then it was about writing. And I never set out to be a writer. I was a professor and that's all I was planning to be, but it was just like something in me went, "Yes." And I got so curious about a lot of things.

Rowan Mangan: It's so woo when it happens. Like when it starts happening and you're just like, "WTF."

Martha Beck: Right.

Rowan Mangan: Like old me, that is a noun, doesn't give a shit about that. But now suddenly I'm like, "Ooh," and I always think about it as like feeling your way forward in the dark a little bit.



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- Martha Beck: Yeah. And you know, this is when the culture immediately, the acculturation will start to kick in and push you away from your curiosity. Well, that doesn't mean anything. Who cares about rowing? Why are you listening to that song? That's stupid. What's the point? You're not being productive, right? Like why would you be interested in something you've never even thought about before? Because maybe I'm supposed to be something I've never even thought about before.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. And so, next time you get an odd curiosity, follow it. Go down the rabbit hole. Google everything. Go looking.
- Rowan Mangan: And the thing is, you do it anyway because it's fun. It's exciting.
- Martha Beck: Well you do it. I do it. But both of us were allowed to be quite free growing up to explore our interests. So some people out there may be like, "Oh, that's a little scary." I'm telling you, it's worth it.
- Rowan Mangan: But isn't there a kind of enthusiasm that comes as you're in this process?
- Martha Beck: Yes. Oh, the more you pursue it the better it gets. So then you get to the phase of enthusiasm, which I've heard it defined also, fascination, as attention without effort. So it's like you have to force yourself to pay attention to your tax returns or whatever. But then there are things, and then there's passive stuff like TV where you can veg out, but this is fascination. This is moving forward, pushing to learn more and not being conscious of working at it or doing anything hard because it's just... When the curiosity becomes enthusiasm, you're like a river running downhill.
- Rowan Mangan: Right.
- Martha Beck: You're... You're a tinkle from the loins of God.
- Rowan Mangan: Good God, Martha. That's disgusting.
- Martha Beck: I'm sorry. You're a tinkle from the loins of the divine force you believe in, any higher power you like.
- Rowan Mangan: The higher power of your choosing.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. You're a higher power piss is what you are.
- Rowan Mangan: You're a golden shower from a higher power.



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- Martha Beck: And the thing is, piss is both a verb and a noun.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh, my God, the hunter becomes hunted. I think in the last one-and-a-half minutes, we just lost every single person who's listening.
- Martha Beck: Everyone. Okay. So I'm going to say something here that is really true, because I've seen you do it.
- Rowan Mangan: Is it literally true?
- Martha Beck: It's literally true.
- Rowan Mangan: Okay.
- Martha Beck: And it's empirically true. It's physical. You start to move stuff around in your living space and then you start changing your style, your personal style.
- Rowan Mangan: So we were up in the bedroom this morning, chatting away, starting to talk about the podcast and just also chatting and catching up. And I was saying to Marty, "Here's what I want to do here. I want to move this to here and this to here." And it was, again, so exciting. Moving furniture around is not necessarily the most interesting thing for me most of the time.
- Martha Beck: Oh, it's wonderful.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. Yeah. So, sorry, Marty is excited over there. She likes things about that. Not me. But now I do. I don't know what I like. I like. That's my verb. I like. And today it's moving furniture. And it's so funny because I've heard you talk about this again and again, and it's not like I'm following a rule book where it's like, "Oh, I'm going through a change. I'll get finding your North Star out." It's not like that. It's like suddenly the joy is in the moving furniture around. And then I'm like, "Oh, that's one of those things Marty says is a part of this,".
- Martha Beck: And then we're watching.
- Rowan Mangan: If anyone wants to look into it, it's called square two in her work.
- Martha Beck: And then we're watching TV and there's a woman who has a cool jacket over a shirt that's not tucked in, and you're like, "Okay, that." And it's not how you've been dressing, but-



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- Rowan Mangan: It was actually a man dressed like that. I think we... Oh, no, we didn't talk about this. Yeah. Yeah. It was a man, and I was like, "That's how I want to dress."
- Martha Beck: Yeah. And you'll change your hair. Oh, I remember a time. So we were living in California and Rowie is a person of great personal discipline. So she wanted to go to this thing called the Hoffman Institute, which is like a total change your life 10 day thing.
- Rowan Mangan: But not out of discipline. It was another one of these things.
- Martha Beck: Oh.
- Rowan Mangan: I knew to go there. I just absolutely knew to go there.
- Martha Beck: Oh, that's so cool. I didn't know that. Anyway, she went off for 10 days and did all this psychological stuff and we weren't allowed to communicate at all, so we didn't know anything. So she comes back to our home and this is when she had the long mane of hair. A lot of hair. And she came in and she was like... She got there at night after driving all day, and she was like, "Cut. Off. My. Hair. My hair has to go." And we were like, "Are you sure?" I cut it in stages because having practiced on myself...
- Rowan Mangan: Surprised I let you at it, to be honest.
- Martha Beck: I didn't do a so bad job.
- Rowan Mangan: No, you did great.
- Martha Beck: But you were like, "No, no, I can't wait and go to a hair salon. Cut it off right now." And the moment we cut your hair off, you looked so much like yourself suddenly.
- Rowan Mangan: Right?
- Martha Beck: And you'd looked like yourself with long hair before you went, but you were a different person.
- Rowan Mangan: And that was it. And it was like that, "I need this hair off me right now. Like, get it off me. I can't do this anymore. I can't do this self anymore."
- Martha Beck: You know what I'm afraid right now? I'm afraid I'm going to wake up tomorrow being a virtually hairless creature from birth and go, "I really need a huge mane of wild hair."



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Rowan Mangan: And then I've got it in a bag. I could just get some scotch tape and... We can do that.

Martha Beck: It would look about as good as it did when I was cutting my own myself. Yeah. So you start to change your look, and the hair is actually really significant. I used to be a teaching fellow for Orlando Patterson at Harvard. Drink, please-

Rowan Mangan: Relatable.

Martha Beck: ... who was the world's leading authority on slavery. And so I had to learn all these things about slavery. And one of the things that surprised me was that in all of the cultures that have practiced slavery, which are many, the US was by far the most egregious, horrible, bad, don't-do-it offender. But slaves always had to wear a certain hairstyle, and that was a big racist component because having curly hair, or really curly hair, was one of the ways they tried to get people who were trying to pass because their parents had been through all these horrible rape scenarios. So they ended up looking almost white. But if their hair was curly, they were still considered slave material. I mean, it was really, really weird and shocking to realize how powerful hairstyle is as a marker of social status.

Rowan Mangan: Wow. Yeah. I mean, it's certainly a way that many of us express identity.

Martha Beck: Oh, everyone. Literally, it's-

Rowan Mangan: Whoa. The bald.

Martha Beck: Oh, yeah. There are people who don't have much of a choice, like Lila right now, doesn't have that big a choice. We've tried putting little Pookies in her hair though, and she pulls them right out.

Rowan Mangan: She won't have it.

Martha Beck: Anyway. Changing your hair is like massively courageous. Like if you don't have the velocity of water running downhill, you won't do it because it's such a shift of identity that you're afraid of what other people's reaction might be.

Rowan Mangan: You dyed your hair dark.

Martha Beck: Yeah.

Rowan Mangan: From blonde.



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- Martha Beck: Yeah. Well, I was pushed, but I said, "Yes." My hairdresser, Yuli, she goes, "I don't like when people's hair same color as skin. It's like one big skinhead. I darken it a few shades. You mind?" I was like, "No, go ahead," thinking I'd have like a honey blonde. She dyes my hair, she pulls off the towel and she goes, "Don't freak out."
- Rowan Mangan: And you didn't.
- Martha Beck: We didn't. I like it. It's not a color found in nature, but I love that.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. It's cool. So, okay. So let me get this straight. We're talking about the symptoms of metamorphosis. We have odd curiosity, the things that where you are taking that first step away from your fear, right?
- Martha Beck: Mm-hmm.
- Rowan Mangan: And being curious about things that don't make much sense. Then we have the enthusiasm part where it all starts flowing and you're moving things around and you're changing your hair. And you said, then is the pursuit or tracking phase.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. Then comes the pursuit, is you are sure that what you want to do is play the piano, or whatever. And at first it comes naturally. You're just so into it and you're learning fast. And then there comes a time where you have to pursue the sound that you really want to make, or you decide you're going to do a life's work of creating a company. And it sounds really great in the abstract, but then you have to put your hands in the clay and start saying, "Okay, I have to learn how to make this. I'm going to chase this down." It's no longer a matter of, "Huh, I feel curious." Or, "Oh, this is effortless." It's like, "No, I want to be this thing." It still may have no name but the image is getting clearer. And every time you have an experience of joy and fulfillment, it's like another track in the pursuit of this creature, which is your future self. And-
- Rowan Mangan: That's wild.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. And there was a time when I was obsessed with feeling like I was becoming something and all I could hear in my mind was this-
- Rowan Mangan: Indigo Girls going, (singing).
- Martha Beck: Well, there was that. But there was also T.S. Eliot, another great big lesbian.
- Rowan Mangan: Famously.



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- Martha Beck: Famously lesbian. Did you not know?
- Rowan Mangan: I suspected.
- Martha Beck: So she writes, "I said to my soul be still and wait without love for it would be love of the wrong thing. And wait without hope for it would be hope of the wrong thing. There is yet faith, but the love and the hope and the faith are all in the waiting. Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought. So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing."
- Rowan Mangan: Wow. That is such... I love that bit of that poem, but more than anything, it's like, oh, that's exactly what we are talking about today.
- Martha Beck: Wait.
- Rowan Mangan: And that's, yeah... just clicked in. "Wait without hope. Wait without thought. Wait without love."
- Martha Beck: And so that, it totally changed my life because I now had a language, a bit of language to put on what was happening to me. "Oh, something's changing. What am I becoming? What's going to happen to me?" "Wait without thought for you are not ready for thought." And that felt true. So I could say, "All right, I'm not sure where this is going. I am going to pursue my interests. I'm going to try to guess what it is. I'm going to go as a verb. But I'm going to go hard." That's the pursuit phase. I'm going to track hard, because the little bursts of joy are the footprints of your future self.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh, I love that so much that your future self has walked ahead of you and left footprints on the path. That's so gorgeous.
- Martha Beck: I showed Lila her first set of deer tracks yesterday and she got it. I didn't think she would. Sorry, that was just a little cabal there. Anyway. Then there's one final phase, which is...
- Rowan Mangan: Wait, wait, wait. I want to say something about the pursuit and just that hard work idea, you know, just that. We were talking recently about... I don't know. So my natural way of thinking is probably quite countercultural because I think the culture generally says, "Work hard and you'll... Blah, blah, blah." But for me, I always think geniuses are geniuses. It just pours out of them effortlessly. But we were talking recently about someone that we know and it's like smart people who work really hard, that's the people that we see most purely fulfilling their mission and you can feel it in the way that they work. But also in that it's not easy.



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Martha Beck: Right.

Rowan Mangan: And I think that's been a big learning for me because it's also forced me to stop excluding myself from people who can do things because I thought it was effortless. And then I've watched people like you and other people who I do consider brilliant geniuses.

Martha Beck: Oh, thank you.

Rowan Mangan: And I'm like, "Oh, no, she has to go up there and name the document." And there's something about that where it's just like...

Martha Beck: Naming the document is a bitter struggle.

Rowan Mangan: It makes it so real to me.

Martha Beck: Ah, yeah.

Rowan Mangan: That you have a document there and you know... Anyway, that's silly, but working hard, smart people who work hard.

Martha Beck: Yeah. Without the pursuit phase, if you're not willing to pursue and you just let yourself be a trickle all the time and you never gain that internal momentum, often because you're waiting for a thought, but you're not ready for thought. Just go, right?

Rowan Mangan: Ah, right.

Martha Beck: Okay. That is who I would like to identify as. Go.

Rowan Mangan: Oh, that's good.

Martha Beck: Yeah.

Rowan Mangan: That's good. I would like to identify as wait without thought.

Martha Beck: I thought, just weight, like the weight of a sack of beans. I would like to identify myself as a weight without thought.

Rowan Mangan: Basically like a paperweight, but larger.

Martha Beck: Yeah. But the hard way... It's funny because Hesiod said, the Roman poet, he said, "Mediocrity is easy and the way to it is level and smooth. But in front of excellence, the gods have put boulders and the way to it is hard and steep. But when you get to the top, then it is easy even though it is hard."



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- Rowan Mangan: Huh, that's cool.
- Martha Beck: So, yeah. It's like, to not do it is hard.
- Rowan Mangan: And to do it is hard.
- Martha Beck: Yes. And literally everything in my life has happened because I was terrified to go forward, but I was more terrified of not going forward.
- Rowan Mangan: Huh. Yeah.
- Martha Beck: Like when I quit academia, I remember my then husband said, "We should quit our jobs." I was 30, he was 33, and I was like, "Why? We're on these cushy tenure track professorships." And he said, "Do you want to do this every day for the rest of your life?" And I was like, "Oh, my God, we've got to quit right now." And we did without any other jobs right then, with three kids. It was not a low-risk dive, but it had to happen.
- Rowan Mangan: Well, and it happened that way and you took that risk because you were already in this stage of the metamorphosis, right? No one's saying quit your job.
- Martha Beck: Oh, no, I wouldn't. I would never. Stay in your job and do something wordless when you get home, or even at your desk, if you can hide it. And speaking of at your desk, there's the, "You've got mail phase." And the-
- Rowan Mangan: So this is the final symptom of this part of the personal metamorphosis.
- Martha Beck: Yes. It's kind of where you break through and you can start to have an identity. In the coaching system that I teach, I know this is so gimmicky and gross, but we call it the three Ns. First you notice what you're interested in. Then you narrow it down in the pursuit phase. And then when you've already done it, then you give it a name.
- Rowan Mangan: Huh. So you don't search for a name that the culture already gave it.
- Martha Beck: That's a sure way to get shoehorned into something that is not your nature.
- Rowan Mangan: Right.
- Martha Beck: You have to become whatever it is and then give yourself a title.



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- Rowan Mangan: Right.
- Martha Beck: And, yeah, I haven't come up with a good title for myself. Wayfinder is what I stick on everything because that's the verb form. I mean that is the noun form of the real identity word which is go.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, that's so cool. So tell me about the "You've got mail."
- Martha Beck: That's when people start coming to you and saying, "Well, this..." It happened to you with the Substack thing you were talking about. You were pulled toward it, like a fish on a hook, going, "Why am I so curious?" And then you really worked hard. You took the class, you signed up for it. You wrote these... Like you've been working hard.
- Rowan Mangan: Very hard.
- Martha Beck: And yesterday you wrote a piece that really knocked my socks off, and you put it out there and people started... Well, they came to you before that even happened and said, "Do you want to be part of this group that is..." I don't even know. You were just selected to be part of a group.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. Like this class thing that I was talking about.
- Martha Beck: Right, right, right. But that just came from nowhere. Somebody just noticed your stuff and said, "Yeah, we want more of that."
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah.
- Martha Beck: And that's the way... If you're doing something that has no name, people just have to see it. It's like Steve Jobs was a great genius of creating something no one knew they needed, which they knew they needed as soon as they saw it.
- Rowan Mangan: Right. Yeah.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. That like, "I didn't know how badly I needed my iPhone. I really need it. It's like a fifth limb." So, yeah, you started to get this, "You've got mail" thing where people drop in and say, "Do that again. Do that for money. Do that with me. Come on, do it over here. Come to this group. Do that there." And you start naming what you're doing and because it's absolutely what you are meant to be at that moment, you can name it and start to be yourself in the world. Accept that. You're still a tinkle from the loins of your higher power. And you have to be ready to let it go because the caterpillar only does it once, but you could do it as many times as you want.



# BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK  
AND ROWAN MANGAN

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- Rowan Mangan: Well, it's going to happen to you, whether you want it or not.
- Martha Beck: That's true. That's true. It's not a choice really. It's your nature.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. So how do we figure this thing out, Marty? This weird phase, this undefined phase between being one thing, feeling like one sort of thing, and becoming... Or it's actually the phase where you are a verb between possibly two nouns.
- Martha Beck: Yeah, before you have the name. That's what I really want to promote in this podcast. Be nothing. Be nebulous and misty.
- Rowan Mangan: So I feel like the idea that just kept coming to me is this idea of a space for dreaming. Like that's what I don't think our culture allows us is the fallow time, that sort of negative space time where you're just waiting to see what rises. The wait without thought if you are not ready for thought time. And it feels so important because this is something where the culture is within us, pressuring us. Not coming from other people so much, because you can feel the change. And there's such a rush, like us with Lila, she'll be an engineer. She's building towers out of blocks. That anxiety that rises to re-noun the self in that time where you are really not... The imago cells are just glittering around you. So for me, I've made a space for dreaming and watching. Watching what happens, and that space is real. I'm spending a lot of time in a different part of the house than I had been. And it's also just-
- Martha Beck: The bathroom.
- Rowan Mangan: Hmm?
- Martha Beck: The bathroom.
- Rowan Mangan: Hey, when the trickle comes.
- Martha Beck: Yeah, that's right. You better be ready.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. So a space for dreaming is how I've kind of figured it out for myself. What about you?
- Martha Beck: There's a story that really helps me.
- Rowan Mangan: Is it about urination in some way?
- Martha Beck: No.
- Rowan Mangan: Okay.



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Martha Beck: It's about China, as many of my favorite stories are. It's in ancient China. When a kid was a year old, if it was a boy, because women weren't given professions, but they would set the baby in the middle of several objects. There was like a writing pen, there was a knife. I can't remember the objects, but they represented different professions, and the baby would crawl and pick up an object and whatever he picked up, that was going to be his life at one.

At the same time, I think as a resistance to this kind of being buttonholed, there was a dude and I don't remember his name, but he was a Dallas monk and he went off to the mountains to decide what he wanted to be. And he gave himself space to dream and he would come back occasionally. He was 20, he was 40, he was 60. And he was like, "No, not yet. Hasn't settled in yet." When he was 80, he finally came back and said, "Okay, I'm a teacher and I know what I'm going to teach." And he got to work in his 80s and kept teaching till he was 120.

Rowan Mangan: Cool.

Martha Beck: He still had 40 years of being this. And part of it was that he was in this constant fluid state and that's what he had to teach. But that... Like, don't give up. However old you are, however stuck you may think you are, the metamorphosis happens from within you. It's from the inside. And if you go with it, life will make a way for you. That's my thinking.

Rowan Mangan: Life will make a way for you. And what I'm making sure I do is I don't rush to become a noun again. I'm just here in the goo watching the little glitters of imago cells around me.

Martha Beck: Fabulous. So let's just all stay with that thought and...

Rowan Mangan: 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. We're also on Instagram. Our handle is @bewilderedpodcast. You can follow us to get updates, hear funny snippets and outtakes, and chat with other fans of the show.

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