



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Episode #37: Blowing Up Your Life

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 Bewildered, the podcast for people trying to figure it out. Not us though, we wouldn't know what that's like at all.
- Martha Beck: No, no, no. We never have to try to figure anything out because we just lie under the bed and pretend it's not happening.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, that's right.
- Martha Beck: I speak for myself. And speaking for myself, yes.
- Rowan Mangan: Yes.
- Martha Beck: The Royal we. But seriously, what are you trying to figure out these days, Ro?
- Rowan Mangan: Oh, just not much. Just everything.
- Martha Beck: Oh, that.
- Rowan Mangan: Just all of it.
- Martha Beck: Yeah, that. That.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. No, the thing-
- Martha Beck: Which parts of that?



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Rowan Mangan: Yeah, the thing that's plaguing me right now is I have this situation where I like all the things that I do. I like being a mother, I like writing a story, I like being a job lady with a job.

Martha Beck: A job lady.

Rowan Mangan: I like writing a newsletter. I like it.

Martha Beck: You like it all.

Rowan Mangan: But not at the same time.

Martha Beck: But you should do all that while riding a unicycle on an elephant's back.

Rowan Mangan: I do.

Martha Beck: It's true.

Rowan Mangan: That's exactly the experience that I'm describing. Thank you for putting it into words.

Martha Beck: Oh, it's really rough. Because it's a whole frame of mind. And what everybody thinks, what I used to think is I'll just work on my book, then I'll go put the kids down for their naps, then I'll come back and work on the book again. Book writing lady is not have children lady.

Rowan Mangan: Exactly.

Martha Beck: They don't even know each other.

Rowan Mangan: Oh my God. And the jet lag.

Martha Beck: Say more?

Rowan Mangan: Like, to get up out of book lady and over into mom lady. It can't.

Martha Beck: It's a whole ... yeah, it's like you have to go up on a rocket to the moon and then come back and do re-entry. You can't just click, click, click into these different personae.

Rowan Mangan: I just don't ... I can't figure it out. I can't ... there's nothing wrong. I just need a different life for each of them. Is that so freaking much to ask, Marty?

Martha Beck: Just eight or ten-



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Rowan Mangan: Lifetimes?

Martha Beck: Yes. Simultaneous lifetime trajectories where you just get to be what you are.

Rowan Mangan: I just need to dedicate myself to one of my many passions.

Martha Beck: Please. Please. Could you dedicate yourself to me?

Rowan Mangan: That's already happened.

Martha Beck: So you're juggling that one pretty well. Am I the elephant under the unicycle. I hope to be.

Rowan Mangan: You are always the elephant under my unicycle, babe.

Martha Beck: Oh, gosh.

Rowan Mangan: What are you trying to figure out, Marty?

Martha Beck: Mine isn't as profound. I'm just trying to figure out how not to scream and fall down at physical therapy.

Rowan Mangan: Just at physical therapy?

Martha Beck: Yes, because people aren't necessarily watching and/or they don't see me do it every week. So they think that I'm in a genuine catastrophe when I scream and fall down in other places.

Rowan Mangan: When you scream and fall down here, Karen and I just carry on.

Martha Beck: Yeah. You just sort of step over the body and keep going. I'm having ... oh, and by the way. Physical therapy is American for physio.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah.

Martha Beck: The physio.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah. Americans won't go to anything unless someone tells them it's therapy.

Martha Beck: Yeah, my physical therapist is like, "Flex this. How did you feel when you were five?" This woman is-

Rowan Mangan: Flex this. How did you feel when you-



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Martha Beck: Were you forced to flex this as a child?

Rowan Mangan: Oh dear.

Martha Beck: That's terrible. Actually, this woman is a dream come true. In my childhood, seriously, I had this imaginary friend named, a nurse, because I had my tonsils out when I was two. And this woman came into the child ward where I was and she was like tucking in children ... she was really good with kids and really firm. I was the seventh of eight kids, no one actually knew where I was in any given time. And I said to the kid in the next cot, "Who is that woman?" And the kids said, "That's a nurse." And I was like, "A nurse? That name shall be sacred to me."

And a nurse was my disciplinary and imaginary friend. Well, I have found a nurse in the real world, in the person of my physical therapist. She does things like, "All right, put your head on the ground, straighten both legs, feet on the floor. And now toddle, toddle." I mean, not that. But she knows a hundred different exercises. And I'm like, I don't even know ... that sounds like the ministry of silly walks. And she's like, "No, like this." And she's got 50 pounds and she does the silly walk. Then I'm like, "All right, that doesn't look too hard." And I pick up a five pound weight and try it. And I proceed to the screaming and falling down and I'm not even exaggerating.

Rowan Mangan: Okay, so far what I've got from this is exercise is hard.

Martha Beck: Yes, very.

Rowan Mangan: I will never try it.

Martha Beck: Oh, that's such a good idea. Why didn't I ... you just figured it out.

Rowan Mangan: Now, toddle, toddle, toddle.

Martha Beck: Toddle, toddle. I am not ... okay, this is literally true. Literally I am not exaggerating this one iota. I was doing my little physical therapy with the other people there in the physical therapy gym. I didn't think I was being that loud. But then I heard a man across the hall saying to another physical therapist, "You're going to have to put that woman in the hospital." I used to be so tough.

Rowan Mangan: Did you?

Martha Beck: No.

Rowan Mangan: No.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Martha Beck: I've always been a scream and fall down kind of person.

Rowan Mangan: It suits you.

Martha Beck: Oh, does that lead us as a segue into our topic of the day? Or does it-

Rowan Mangan: Not at all.

Martha Beck: Okay, great. Let's just segue. Segue. This is the segue part.

Rowan Mangan: I was once ... I have to tell you about possibly one of the most perfect moments of my life is that once I was having dinner at a friend's house and we were talking about those things segways that you stand on and you lean forward.

Martha Beck: Oh right.

Rowan Mangan: And it drives you along the street.

Martha Beck: Like a little scooter.

Rowan Mangan: Sort of. My friend, Jeff, his daughter walked in and she said, "Hey, speaking of segues and had another story about those things where you lean forward and go down the street." But it was speaking of segways. It was like a dream within a dream. It was inception of segues.

Martha Beck: Oh.

Rowan Mangan: It was a segue within a segue about a segway.

Martha Beck: Oh my God. Mind blown.

Rowan Mangan: Mind blowing.

Martha Beck: That actually is a perfect segue.

Rowan Mangan: We'll be right back with more Bewildered.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

I have a favor to ask. You might not know this but ratings and reviews are like gold in the podcasting universe. They get podcast 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. 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.

Martha Beck: We're talking about something that our wonderful friend and listener, Sydney, did send in.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah. So this is a BeWild files episode where we hear what y'all are trying to figure out and we can just all be bewildered together. So let's hear from Sydney.

Sydney: I am in a huge life upheaval right now. A few months ago, it felt like everything exploded and I just intuitively knew that I had to flip my whole life upside down and start fresh. So, I did that thing where you quit your job and you move and it's chaotic. And it still is. I'm technically unemployed and homeless, but I'm calling it nomadic and self-employed. I just realized the past 10 years, I felt like I was in a sleepy haze and time is ticking and I have dreams I want to pursue. I'm a musician, I want to go for it. I've received so much criticism about my life choices. So, if you have any tips on that, that'd be great.

Rowan Mangan: Wow.

Martha Beck: Brave, brave Sydney.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah.

Martha Beck: Kudos. So, you're hearing the whole voices of culture everywhere.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah. The criticism. Vile.

Martha Beck: But also, Sydney's done this brilliant sort of reframe.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. I love how she's taking what's technically unemployed and homeless and calling it self-employed nomadic. Which is brilliant because the way that you come back at the culture, Marty, is that you name shit. I mean, you actually got me onto this. You're brilliant at just thinking up a name for something. Actually the other day, we tried to do a podcast on a different topic and we had to abandon it because Marty decided to name this feeling cravy...
- Martha Beck: Cravy gravy. Yeah, cravy gravy. I mean, isn't that not catchy? It's about when you crave something, it's that flavor. Like if you were-
- Rowan Mangan: So we had to abandon it. But nevertheless, naming things is good. And the self-employed nomad.
- Martha Beck: Right? Suddenly it's anthropological in its scope. For hundreds of thousands of years, people were nomadic and self-employed.
- Rowan Mangan: And experiencing cravy gravy.
- Martha Beck: All the time. And probably just munching that cravy gravy. Oh, terrible. Well, you do eat gravy, you just don't munch it. That gives the impression that it's solid. Solid gravy is horrible. I don't cravy that gravy. Everybody out there who is fascinated by the phrase, cravy gravy and I desperately wants a podcast on it, just email.
- Rowan Mangan: So there are these inspirational quotes that get sent out from Martha Beck and they're called compass points. They go out by email, social media and all this inspirational stuff. I'm going to ensure that the week this podcast comes out, the inspirational quote, I know cravy that gravy is included. Sorry, Sydney. Sorry. We got a little bit off track there.
- Martha Beck: I just had this weird sense that you were talking to Sydney, Australia. Like "Hello, New York."
- Okay, anyway. The point is that this nomadic self-employed lifestyle, following a job situation is not okay with the culture. And the language around leaving that is so violent for us. It's like, I blew up my life, everything's exploding.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. Hang on, I just want to say the thing about the renaming stuff and what strikes me so much in this whole topic is what Sydney's doing is she's saying, "I'm a self-employed nomad." She's not doing is saying, "I'm not homeless, I'm not unemployed." Because that is in reaction to the culture.
- Martha Beck: Yeah. It sounds defensive. It sounds [inaudible 00:12:19].



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Rowan Mangan: You're using the culture's own terminology and denying it. And that's buying in. I keep thinking in reaction to, is a form of buying in. In political discourse, Democrats having to go, "It's not a death tax." And then boom, then whoever's named it the death tax has won because then you've using the term.

Martha Beck: That's right. Everybody's repeating that. Language is the bedrock of culture, so when you shift the language, you shift the culture.

Rowan Mangan: Absolutely. Yeah, yeah. I love it. So it's all language. It's exploding your life and here's the thing, exploding your life is ... right, I mean, I think Sydney said, I've flipped it upside down. But it's all these very, very violent images. The reason is that leaving the culture is a violent act. Culture is so powerful that you need an immense amount of energy-

Martha Beck: Interesting.

Rowan Mangan: To break out of it. This is my theory. You have to do it for real. It has to be an explosion because if you just tiptoe out of the culture and leave a trail of breadcrumbs behind you, you're going to go back.

Martha Beck: Yes.

Rowan Mangan: You're going to go back because you're going to have a dark cold night when you'd give anything to go back to your warm bed and culture. That's how the culture gets you unless you explode it.

Martha Beck: Yeah. When I worked with clients, I would say, "You're trying to parachute and hold onto the airplane at the same time." If you're just hanging onto a rudder or something ... not the rudder. The wing, and you expect your parachute to inflate then and gently take you down, but you're not going to let go until the parachute in flight. Then that is death. I mean, jumping on the plane is really, really scary. You could call it violent.

I mean, another thing that came up for me while you were talking about that is that birth is so violent. Birth is a violent experience for the mother and for the baby. It's almost like going to a new phase of your life. You have to go through that birth experience and you're right, it's gnarly.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, it is. So what culture will tell you is exactly what Sydney said, she feels like the last 10 years of her life have been a sleepy haze. Culture's like, that's perfect. That's fine. It's going to be comfortable, it's going to be boring, it's going to be predictable. There's going to be fluorescent lights. There's going to be health insurance. Just live out the rest of your days here and don't challenge anything, don't be challenged by anything. And that's fine.
- Martha Beck: Yes. Put on your uncomfortable shoes and your smart office wear and just do what you're told. Rowie, at this juncture, may I quote Dante?
- Rowan Mangan: Oh, I was hoping you would.
- Martha Beck: I knew you were just setting it up. No, the very first lines of The Divine Comedies say, "In the middle of this, our life, I came to myself in a dark wood and the right way had been lost." It's exactly this sleepy haze, it's misty, he can't remember how he got there. He's like, "I don't know the way out and I just don't like it here." He tries to climb a mountain to get out and everything. But what he has to do to get out is to go through hell, to go through the inferno. It's another metaphor for the violence of the act of not staying in the haze.
- Rowan Mangan: Instead of either being in the culture or in reaction to the culture, you have to go through hell in order to be on your own terms.
- Martha Beck: He doesn't take anybody with him. Well, he has a ghost guiding him.
- Rowan Mangan: We all do.
- Martha Beck: Wait until the movie comes out, guys. It's going to be a laugh riot. So I want to ... here's the thing. You are way better at this than I am. You've done it over and over.
- Rowan Mangan: At causing explosions?
- Martha Beck: Well, I've caused a lot of explosions.
- Rowan Mangan: It's awesome.
- Martha Beck: Well, this is not literally true. But the self-employed nomad thing, you're way more experienced at this than I am.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Rowan Mangan: I probably spent 10 years of my life in that mode, Sydney. So, I'm right there with you. God, it's so funny. I did a lot of travel and that's not exactly what Sydney's talking about, I don't think because she's just like-

Martha Beck: But you did quit jobs, yeah?

Rowan Mangan: Oh yeah. I quit a ton of jobs. I quit more jobs than I ever got.

Martha Beck: You just walk into a company and go, "You can't fire me, I quit." And then walk out.

Rowan Mangan: A friend of ours had a song that she wrote that had the line, "I've died more times than I've been born." Yeah. So cool.

Martha Beck: Cool, cool thing.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah. So for me, that way of living is ... living outside of culture in that way, it's really important to me, I found as we started talking about this. It's quite a deep, almost value system for me. And it's about ... it's what I was saying before. It's not about being in the culture because. But it's really, really, definitely not about being in reaction to the culture. That's what's hard is that it's easy to be the thing or the opposite of the thing. What's tricky is being neither. And that's what I think is so interesting about this. Because that's the frontier, that's living right on the edge, the frontier. And that's what Sydney's doing with her music, with her life. And it's freaking awesome. And it is so hard.

Martha Beck: It really, really is.

Rowan Mangan: And it is the only way that you can ever be sure your life is real.

Martha Beck: Wow.

Rowan Mangan: That is my soapbox.

Martha Beck: I love that. I'm going to hop back into a call back to what you were saying as the thing you're trying to figure out. Because as a working mother of young toddlers, the first time around, I wrote my dissertation on how women are coping with these multiple demands. What I found was exactly what you're saying. Some women were super traditional, white picket fence, staying home with the kiddies, which was great. Then there were others who were super duper feminist and hated that whole idea. At either extreme, there were sort of these wars going on.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

But most of the women, what I found out was that they were being asked to do impossible things, to work as a man in the culture, get a job, earn the money. And as a woman, which is never get a job. They were trying to reconcile mutually exclusive things. And so, there were the culture and the antagonism to the culture. But in the middle, there were a bunch of women who'd been so conflicted that they popped out of social construction completely. They went to this third thing. At first I didn't even notice it, and then when I went back and looked at my data and saw it, I was like, "What's the third thing?" And the answer was leaving culture.

I hadn't even connected that to what you were doing. I thought you were being cool and having adventures. But you were like, "No, no, no, it is not the job thing and it is not the homeless living with your mother thing." Or whatever it is. It is a different thing. It is to walk outside the culture on my own path. I hear your stories of doing that. And I didn't do that. I did it in a much more culture bound way than you or Sydney. I just sort of hung in there until I couldn't stand a situation again and then I would do something like leaving my religion, that sort of did blow it all up. But the way you've done it was a stated value for you from the beginning.

- Rowan Mangan: The explosion was just the means. It wasn't the point. For you, I think you were saying, there's that sense of a crucible. For me it's like, no, it's just adventure. But it's not adventure in a swash buckling way. It's very deep sense of ... I need a Franco line, inevitable. I need a Franco lyric. I was blessed with a birth and a death and I guess I just want some say in between. It's like to me, taking life as seriously as I possibly can, means throwing everything away again and again. And starting fresh and walking out into a street that I've never seen before as many mornings as I can.
- Martha Beck: You've given me the chills, Rowan Mangan.
- Rowan Mangan: And smelling different smells. But I like to smell a new smell.
- Martha Beck: Let's just go around the house and smell everything to make sure that we have the richness of that experience.
- Rowan Mangan: Can I tell you something?
- Martha Beck: Yes, please.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Rowan Mangan: People ... I don't know if anyone who knows me actually listens to this. But people who know me well, will know that one of my things that I do, which must be so obnoxious. It must be so hard to be my friend. Is like if people order something in a restaurant, a nice dish, I will ask to smell it. Not to have a bite. No, that would be too normal. Man, this is what it's like to live outside coaching. You just go around smelling your friends' desserts.

Martha Beck: Oh, I'm so glad you said desserts at the end.

Rowan Mangan: That's what I call them.

Martha Beck: Okay. Oh Lordy. So how do we deal with it? How do we figure it all out?

Rowan Mangan: I will tell you in just a minute.

So Sydney was saying that she was having trouble handling the criticism that she was getting from the culture. Which you have talked about as change back attacks-

Martha Beck: Oh yeah.

Rowan Mangan: The voices of the culture when you change, when you try to leave it. You get attacked.

Martha Beck: You do. You do because the culture depends on the participation of all the members and it's painful.

Rowan Mangan: It is. Yeah, it's really painful. But here's the thing. Just deal with it. Sydney, just get used to it. It's not going to go away. It's not. Listen to me, this criticism and the pain that it causes is the price you pay for living in the magical places of this world. Of living on the border, on the frontier right out there. This is what my whole Wild Inventures newsletter is about, on Substack, is it's about when life feels amazing and looks weird, that's when you're doing it right.

Martha Beck: That's the sweet spot. Oh my gosh. That's so helpful.

Rowan Mangan: If it feels good and looks weird. I mean, maybe it doesn't look weird because you might happen to have a true nature that falls in that really narrow band of what the culture considers, but not many people have that.

Martha Beck: Must be nice.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah. Right.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: Geez.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, so that's what I've got to say about criticism. That's not very helpful.
- Martha Beck: Wow, that's amazing. It feels great and looks weird. Oh that, I want that on a bumper sticker. I want it tattooed. Feel good, look weird. Gosh, I've always looked weird but [inaudible 00:24:10]. But I know-
- Rowan Mangan: I just forgot [inaudible 00:24:12].
- Martha Beck: We did a podcast with Glennon Doyle and Abby Wambach and we talked about being in a throuple.
- Rowan Mangan: We did.
- Martha Beck: Go back and listen to previous episodes if you don't know this already. But I had a friend who didn't know this, who emailed me and was like, "That's weird." I mean, after all my life experiences, I still felt this deep pain. It's not fun to be criticized. So for me, what I would say to Sydney, see if it works for her is like, I just breathe and let it hurt. I'm not going to try to push it away. Then up comes my recognition that this ... I watch myself, I watch the other person and I just think, "Oh, they're caught in culture." They're caught. When you're caught in culture, you want to pull everyone back in like crabs trying to pull each other down.
- Rowan Mangan: Because you think that's the only way to be safe. So you are trying to keep ... what she's trying to do is keep you safe.
- Martha Beck: Yes.
- Rowan Mangan: "Don't do that. Don't do that. You don't realize that it's not safe outside of culture."
- Martha Beck: Oh my gosh. When I left Mormonism and they literally think you're going to float in outer darkness for eternity. People would just sob, "No, you can't leave. Make them excommunicate you if you must." And I was like, I don't believe it. I'm not going to do it. But oh my God, they were absolute best motivation in the world. Culture teaches you that leave in the culture is death, destruction. And you just put your guitar in a case and walked off like 20 times?
- Rowan Mangan: I think the culture is a bit like smokers.
- Martha Beck: What?



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Rowan Mangan: Cigarette smokers like, "Don't leave, it's not safe out there. Stay with us. It's so nice here in our nicotine haze."

Martha Beck: I wish I knew what nicotine felt like.

Rowan Mangan: It's amazing.

Martha Beck: Oh, now you just told-

Rowan Mangan: It's so good.

Martha Beck: Disclaimer, kiddies, she's joking.

Rowan Mangan: Don't smoke. Don't be an idiot. Everyone knows it's bad for you. But oh, to go back to the time before we knew it was bad. Well, before we cared.

So yes, and you'll be fine because here's the thing. No, there's no going back, you exploded that. You've burnt that bridge and well done. It's hard. That's the hardest bit. But the mistake that you can make here is expecting to create another life that is comfortable and safe. Because you've given that up, that's what you've given up. You will always live on the frontier now. And oh my God, congratulations. It's so great out here. I'm so glad you're joining us out here.

Martha Beck: Yeah. Oh, so much. I was talking to someone ... you're talking about burning the bridges. I was talking to someone the other day who's going to Burning Man.

Rowan Mangan: Oh yeah.

Martha Beck: Which is a big ... in case somebody doesn't know. A big collection of people-

Rowan Mangan: It's a festival.

Martha Beck: Who set things on fire. I'm not sure. No, it sounds really amazing. And if you've been there and you're a fan, I so respect you. This person was saying, "Yeah, I'm going to go to Burning Man and I wait all year to let this other person out. Then that person has to go back to their job afterwards and everything." And I was like, "Don't come back." And they were all, "But my job and everything." I said, "No, I don't mean that. You may leave your job or you may not. But if you are waiting to go be your authentic self, great. Use it as a stepping stone to being yourself even when you're not going to a special festival."



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Who would you be if you were the Burning Man's self in your job? And maybe the job would work better, maybe it wouldn't. I don't know. But choosing the wild self, you're right, it's a way of life." If you think, "Oh, I've got another role now. I'm my crazy self. I'm going to be an artist." Or whatever. You'll fall right back into the culture.

Rowan Mangan: Right.

Martha Beck: Because you will go by the culture's definition of an artist, definition of a Maverick even. It's so tricky. But as soon as you're doing stereotypes and you're modeling your clothing and your behavior after some other group, you're back in culture.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. You got to be it.

Martha Beck: Yeah. Name it and then fricking be it. That's your trail, that's your path through life.

Rowan Mangan: I think that I spent time trying to leave here, go there, recreate the here there. As long as you believe there's a there, there, then it's not going to lead to anything but disappointment. I think it's the voyage, it's the travel, it's the experience of life. Even if it is life as a pilgrimage. Or it's just a style. It's a style of living that is about smelling different smells every day, that other people might have ordered.

Martha Beck: Maybe you had another life as a dog, the smell thing has been strong here. There used to be an occupation called Explorer. There used to be a world to explore and there were people who lived on that edge of discovery. Darwin going off on the HMS Beagle and figuring out the Theory of Evolution because he was exploring. Then the geographic world got known and people stopped being explorers. There's a value to the voyage itself that I think sings to some people's souls. And it went away. Modern culture stomped it flat. But you would go from working in a call center to being in a \$3 hotel room in India because you value the voyage.

Rowan Mangan: Yeah. Because to me, the richness of experience is the point, the novelty, the newness, the being on the edge of something I've never experienced before.

Martha Beck: So interesting.

Rowan Mangan: Is worth it all to me.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Martha Beck: Because you could do that at any moment. But staying in familiarity is an illusion because you don't know what's going to happen in the next moment. You could, if something radical, if the thought came to you or something radical could happen to you. So if you're valuing the richness of experience, that is the access to a variety of experiences is continuous. You can always read a new book, meet a new person, think a new thought, create something new. But our culture is about the richness of possession, of grabbing something and hanging onto it. Which is not possible. Because everything's always changing. So if you value the richness of experience, you're in tune with the way things actually go, always unexpected, always changing. If you're clamped onto the richness of possession, it's like, "Stay in that job. You're going to need it."

Rowan Mangan: Oh, interesting. Yeah. It's sort of about maintaining the illusion of that anything can be permanent or owned or possessed. It's like, we're not permanent. We're is temporary as it gets.

Martha Beck: Yeah. It's so interesting when people talk to me about why their lives have changed and they're upset because they've lost something. They didn't actually walk away, but they've lost something. They're like, "Why is this happening to me? Why is this happening to me? It's wrong and the universe can't be benevolent." Whatever. One day I just found myself blurting to someone, "It's happening to you because your soul values experience and it's not afraid to suffer." Even suffering is ... because those explorers man, they suffered.

I just read a book about Richard Burton. Sir Richard Burton, who discovered the source of the Nile. At one point, they got attacked. His party got attacked and he came running out of his tent, shouting and somebody threw a spear at him, a javelin and it went right through his face between his teeth in one cheek and out the other and lodged his mouth open. He lost four teeth and it was three or four days before they could take it out. This was not a comfortable profession.

Rowan Mangan: On the other hand, he did get to marry Elizabeth Taylor twice. I don't know if he had the thing in his mouth at the time or not.

Martha Beck: Probably that's what drew her to him. I love a man with a javelin in his face. Boy. But yeah, they would just go ... they would get so sick and they would get so injured and they would just have somebody put him in a stretcher and keep exploring. That's how bright that burns in some people. You're much more like that than me. But as we've been talking about it, I'm like, "I want to light that fire a bit."

Rowan Mangan: Shame, we have a toddler.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: What?
- Rowan Mangan: Shame we have a toddler. Most of those explorers back in the day were not mothers.
- Martha Beck: Can I tell you something? When you said, motherhood is an experience I want to have and the clock is ticking and everything. I went, "Okay, let's have a brand new baby in your late fifties. This will be an adventure." Even the toddler herself is part of my richness of experience.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. Oh, me too.
- Martha Beck: When I was younger, I was just like, "That's what you do, you have kids." But when you do something that looked ... it didn't look weird for me to have kids in my twenties. It looked weird for me to have kids in my fifties. But looking weird and feeling good is how you know you're on the right track.
- Rowan Mangan: And it feels amazing to have that little person in our lives.
- Martha Beck: And actually, if you look back the way the explorers did ... everything they'd done and they would just subtract the suffering. They'd come back with these experiences like jewels in their sort of treasure chest of experience. They wouldn't have any money, it's not the same life when you value possession first, as when you value the richness of experience first. Because you can look back on anything weird that happened to you and say, "What was the richness of experience that came from that?" Even if it was painful, the experience is super rich.
- Rowan Mangan: I wonder if it's harder ... like you had kids when you were expected to. I think that was very difficult for you because you hadn't chosen it as an experience.
- Martha Beck: Well-
- Rowan Mangan: Do you know what I mean? You hadn't gone, "I want this experience right now."
- Martha Beck: Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: It was sort of like, "Here's the next thing."
- Martha Beck: Yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: And it was within the culture.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: Yep.
- Rowan Mangan: Now that's not saying anything about how you feel about your older kids, that's not what I mean at all. But when you're choosing something within culture, the texture of the experience can be harder to access.
- Martha Beck: So different. Yeah, and I wish so much that I could go back and tell that to my 20 year old self. Like wait until you want the experience, not when ... again with the Mormonism. That's what encultured me and you're supposed to have many kids at a young age in that culture. They like women to breed well in captivity. I love those three people that came out of my body beyond anything I can express. But man, when you sit around and say, "No, I really want this." It's just a better ride for everybody.
- Rowan Mangan: I want it not because of the culture or against the culture, but independent of the culture. Like independent of what the expectations are.
- Martha Beck: That's the key thing. You're neither fish nor fowl because both fish and fowl are part of the culture and you're going to be, I don't know, a dragon. It's kind of both. It's like, I'm not going to be fish nor fowl. I'm going to be an elm tree. Like something that's not even on that scale, that spectrum from one side to the other. Get off every-
- Rowan Mangan: Exactly. Off the spectrum.
- Martha Beck: Spectrum of culture.
- Rowan Mangan: And by the way, Sydney, there's fun people out here, there's a lot of fun. It's not like I'm making it sound quite dire, but it's super fun.
- Martha Beck: It can feel dire in those dark nights.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah.
- Martha Beck: But you said something when we were talking about this for a minute before you said, "But you'll get the society of the wild."
- Rowan Mangan: The society of the wild are all waiting for you. Wildlings on the other side of the wall. In the North.
- Martha Beck: Only they don't kill you as much.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Rowan Mangan: They won't kill you as much and it's not quite as cold, most of the time.

Martha Beck: And the weird thing is you might not be able to spot them because they don't wear a certain outfit. They wear their own outfit. It's like Hannah Gadsby said in her show, Douglas, she's talking about being on the autism spectrum. And she says, "If you've met one person on the autism spectrum, you've met one person on the autism spectrum. Everyone's experience is different. You can't categorize."

And I think that if we were all living our wildest lives, you don't immediately spot the others. But there's a kind of glimmer that comes into people's eyes when they realize they're talking to another one. So, when I did all that research on these women, I interviewed like 350 women or something. Some of them were traditionalists, some of them were feminists. But most of them were somewhere off the spectrum and they were living their own lives from the inside. And you could take an 18 year old and an 80 year old, totally different lives, different cultures. If those two got talking and they said, "No, you have to leave the spectrum." Their eyes would light up and they're like, "You're another Explorer."

Rowan Mangan: You called them mystics at one point.

Martha Beck: Yeah, absolutely. They were having mystical experiences. Maybe that's what the explorers were after too. They delighted in each other, no matter how different they were, because the one thing they had in common was an absolute commitment to uniqueness. There was so much love between them and it was just very exciting. The society of the wild is wonderful.

Rowan Mangan: So come join us there, Sydney and everyone else.

Martha Beck: Everybody stay wild.

Rowan Mangan: 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.

Bewildered is produced by Scott Forster with support from the brilliant team at MBI. And remember, if you're having fun, please rate and review and stay wild.