

## TRANSCRIPT



### Here Be Monsters

An independent podcast about fear, beauty, and the unknown. Since 2012.

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**Title** [Blowgun Time Warp](#)  
**Producer** Jeff Emtman  
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From a small studio behind a cracked facade, this is Here Be Monsters, the tenth season

My name is Jeff Emtman and I've been making this show since 2012. This project for me it's been pretty much my whole adulthood and almost all of my professional career. It's hard for me to think just how much I've learned in the process of making the show and how much of a different person I feel like I am now than I was back then. That being said, the core idea of the show remains identical to the day it started. You see, I am a person who is deeply afraid of the unknown. That is my biggest fear. And this show is a project to talk about fear and talk about the unknown and talk about things that are scary and talk about them in a context that feels safe and kind.

Now, if you're new listener, A) I hope you like the show, and B) after you listen to this episode. I really hope you take the opportunity to slowly work your way backwards through the Here Be Monsters archive. Again, this is a show that has been around for quite a while now. And so there's a lot in that back archive. There's some episodes that are interviews, some are documentaries, some are research projects, and some are just kind of broadly experimental. And then there's episodes like this one, which is a personal story where I try to catch some little wisps of smoke that have been floating around in my head and then try and mash them together into a shape and figure out what that shape means. That's what this episode is. That's how all the season started. It's kind of the mood setter for the season. So anyways, this season is going to be 10 episodes long, and they're going to come out about once a month or so until we hit 10. You know, and that will be the season. So whether you're a new listener or whether you're a

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longtime listener, I'm glad you're here. And I'm glad to be back. Thanks for joining me on this 10th season of your be monsters

So I've noticed something strange lately. You see right now my day job (this is why season 10 has been so long in the works) but like right now my day job is editing other people's podcasts. And so we've been doing all of this interview editing, like snipping out the umms and the repeated words. And I think I'm pretty good at that stuff. But it's also incredibly repetitive. Like lots of sitting still just scooting little boxes from one side of the screen to the other. In in these long editing sessions. Sometimes I'll go into this weird trance like there's one half of my brain that stays hyper focused on that. But then on the other side of my head it feels like this like this little itching behind my ear and it's a mental edge, and I just can't ignore it. And suddenly my brain just kind of goes into splitscreen just flies off into the ether to retrieve some distant memory of a place and time that I've been before. I can see things from my life playing back at 1x speed. I don't know how to feel about the sensation. I don't really know if it's normal or not. So I've been writing them down. I've got about 60 so far. Here's a few

I'm walking barefoot on the warm pavement of my grandmother's driveway just after a rainstorm.

My neighbor's basement on a snowy day playing N64. it's GoldenEye.

The floral section of a Safeway I used to shop at a summer sunset at the liquor store next to the armory in Providence.

I'm back in my grandma's house. I'm six years old and I find an Easter egg under a giant leaf.

The notes I'm taking shows that there are patterns emerging—some places that come up more often than others. And for whatever reason there's this one spot that just keeps coming up over and over and over again in my notes. It's the hardware store, the one in Idaho, the one with the linoleum floors and the free popcorn. At first I was surprised I couldn't quite tell why. Now I think I do know the one and only place I've ever won the grand prize

Here Be Monsters: The podcast about being just another kid who didn't own a weathervane...the podcast about the unknown.

The sponsor for this episode is a really special one for me. It's radiolab. Radiolab is a podcast and radio show that experiments with sound and storytelling, allowing science to fuse with culture and information in this really unique way. The reason that radio lab is special to me is because it's the first podcast I ever listened to. It was 2009. I remember exactly where I was. I was riding the bus with my coworker. And she told me that she was listening to something amazing, something that just didn't sound like anything she'd ever heard before. And she handed me one of her earbuds and I put it in my ear totally expecting it to be music. And he was incredibly musical. But it wasn't music, of course, it was Radiolab. And so we spent the rest of that trip in total silence, just sharing that pair of earbuds and listening to Radiolab.

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It was that initial experience that really kind of shaped my brain when it comes to how I think about sound. Radiolab is a show for people who are curious about the world, for people who want to be surprised and moved like I was that day on the bus.

Radio lab is hosted by Lulu Miller and Latif Nasser, and they do experiential investigations that explore the world through people, sound and stories. And so I hope you subscribe to radio lab and thank you radio lab. for sponsoring this episode of Here Be Monsters.

I grew up in the yellow and green hills of Eastern Washington state. We grew a nice garden each year and we had raspberry bushes

There's a tire swing on the Playhouse owl pellets under the pine trees. house with a big porch

I spend a lot of time in the basement of that house. It's always cool and quiet down there. The walls are made of natural wood planks with tiny gaps in between fluorescent light fixtures that hum when you turn them on. And lots of cardboard boxes and bookshelves full of books. An exercise bike, a dress form, a machete and a leather sheath hangs from a nail on the wall.

An upright piano (this one). My mom's Beatles albums. My dad's college textbooks.

A doll that's the size of a first grader.

There are nooks crannies crevices down there. Sometimes things got lost.

My alarm went off at 630 Each morning. Being a country kid meant getting screwed over by the bus schedule. Our house was early on the route so it meant a long early morning bus ride to loop us around country backroads for nearly an hour before we wound up back in town. Think countless winter sunrises through my half open eyes

I went to middle school in a building that was made out of concrete and glass single storey and flap with a large gymnasium on one end. The bus would show up so early that they'd make us wait outside until the staff got there. And when it was too cold outside the lettuce into this long foyer by the gymnasium. On those cold mornings us boss kids would mill around in that foyer fogging up the windows with our breath. We draw hearts and swear words with our fingers on the glass. Play Tic Tac Toe.

Halfway through middle school, I got a CD player with a pair of silver wraparound headphones and i'd sit by the vending machine listening to Ramnstein. Just really trying to finish my homework until someone came to unlock the rest of the building.

I had a hopeless crush on my classmate ever since the first day of sixth grade. Our homeroom teacher had put us in charge of making the name tags for the rest of the class. And we were in the hallway together. And she told me that she liked math and playing the piano. And I like those things too. And then I said something that she thought was funny. And when she laughed it was

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the first time that my young heart had ever melted. And in that instant, I count feelings for her in a big way. And I swore it would be a secret that I would take to my grave.

I was scared of everything back then. But especially heartbreak now a couple times a year we'd have school dances. And in the days before each one an embarrassed looking school administrator would stop by each homeroom and give us a short speech about puberty or changing bodies and why grinding was strictly forbidden at all school functions. I went to some of those stances. Nervous, spent a lot of time standing in the corners looking at my friends dancing. Wishing these things were easier for me. Just hoping to God that she noticed me was always so echoey in that gymnasium to DJ played Justin Timberlake and Missy Elliott and Destiny's Child Sum 41 Backstreet Boys 98 degrees

And to me, I was just always so confused, like who felt like everyone else knew what to do except me. I stood back at the bleachers and pretended I didn't feel panicked. I could see her across the room making eyes that the smartest guy on the math team he was good at sports to

Someone came up to me and asked me , "Jeff why aren't you dancing?" And I repeated a lie. I said "I would dance if they played some good music at these things." And by good, I meant Ramstein. And needless to say he did not play a lot of Ramstein.

Seven miles to the east across the border in Idaho. There's a store that sells everything. I used to go there to get new shoes and like the kits for Pinewood Derby cars. They have a community bulletin board in the entryway where people put up flyers for like church potlucks or sell their old lawnmowers, and people put up pictures of their missing dogs. They have a free popcorn machine in the lobby so you can get free popcorn and eat it while you shop. And so like everything in the store also has like little greasy smudges. Oh and on the weekend they have free donuts.

The back wall was covered in guns. And off to the left was the place where you could buy clothes and Boy Scout merit badges. And on the right side of the store. There were aisles of housewares and tools and camping supplies and paint. I went to this place so many times as a kid that's just kind of burned in my brain. And for a couple of years back there back when I was growing up, the store through this big party once a year near Christmas time. And they invited everyone in the community to come to the store from the early evening until late at night. They had pizza and they had a DJ but most importantly, they had these five absolutely massive clear plastic stockings hanging up in the middle of the store. And they were stuffed with the whole year's best surplus merchandise, all the things that no one wanted to buy. There's just the most random stuff inside of these things. And I don't know, I can't remember exactly what was in these things have gross but like T-shirts with pictures of dogs on them. Like witty mugs, or I don't know, probably like weathervanes or discontinued twine. These stockings were coveted. They were the grand prizes and they got raffled off at the end of the night.

I went to that party a couple of times when I was a kid. The place would be absolutely packed and I'd squeeze my way in between strangers and people my parents knew up to the table with the raffle entry paths and I grabbed a whole pad of them in a pen and I scurry off to a quiet spot in the aisle among the air mattresses and canoe paddles with a piece of pizza bag of popcorn

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and a red solo cup of orange soda. It's grown my name and phone number 100 times leaving grease stains on the paper but always double checking for legibility before turning the drone off and putting it in my stack. And when the pad was empty, I'd push my way back through the congregation of partygoers and dump all 100 tickets into the fishbowl positive that I tip the scales in my favor. This wasn't cheating. This was just how the raffle worked. The tickets were free and you could enter as many times as you wanted. I'd grab another pad and return to my spot. If at the time I brought my next 100 entries back. All my previous entries would be absolutely buried. I pray to the raffle gods for law. In each year I'd go home at the end feeling the sting of being just another kid who didn't own a weathervane.

Seven miles to the west and several years later I was sitting in English class with all my adolescent heartsickness and paralysis when the vice principal walked in unannounced, to deliver a now familiar speech about the evils (and I'm using air quotes here). The evils of freak dancing.

The winter formal is just around the corner. I started considering the prospect of possibly finally asking my crush to go with me. Maybe this was my moment for boldness. Maybe this was my moment to finally try. On the bus ride home, I played out 100 different scenarios: half ending in love and half ending in utter humiliation. But those were outcomes I never had to face because Much to my joy when I got home. My parents reminded me that the late night store party was coming up that very same weekend. It was the same date, the same time as the winter dance. Whatever would I do? Follow my heart I face my fear of rejection? Finally share my feelings with the person that I've been not so secretly in love with for more than a year of my short adolescent life? Or would I sit on a metal shelf for four hours filling out raffle tickets for the chance to win some surplus merchandise from a hardware store?

That weekend I posted up in an aisle full of mops with several 100 entry forms and started working. I phased out my surroundings, drank my soda and just focused on what had to be done at that moment. Work has always felt really natural to me, a lot more natural than dancing. Because the thing that makes me feel most panicky is like trying to be a part of a group that I don't feel I naturally fit in. But if I can just go off into a corner and just focus on like one thing for a really long time. And then bring that one thing back to the group and share that with other people. And that's a model that really works for me, always has.

Over the course of that night I turned in several batches of raffle tickets. And each time I catch these little glimpses down the aisle and it actually see other kids. And they're doing the same exact thing I was—sitting on the shelves filling out our raffle tickets. Most of our classmates were seven miles to the west in a sweaty gymnasium, figuring out who they were all together as a group. And maybe it's bad to miss things like that. Maybe that's like a formative experience that everyone is supposed to have. But on the other hand and to think that we were all figuring out something together too.

Late that night they called my name for the fifth and final stocking. A nice classmate I didn't know very well cheered and clapped for me and it made me feel happy. Adults I'd never met cheered and clapped for me too. I took my prize from the store employee and I bared my teeth in a smile of external validation and consumerism. I raised the stocking above my head like a

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baby lion. And I loudly praised the raffle gods. And for just a moment I temporarily forgot about heart sickness, secret crushes and the menace of the smartest guy on the math team and lover extraordinaire.

I can't remember everything that was in that stocking. I think most of it was pretty unremarkable. I do remember a couple things. I remember there was a small toolbox, a space blanket. A couple of cheap screwdrivers that I still have in us and about 40 plastic clamps. But there was one truly amazing thing wedged in that plastic stocking a blow gun and a dozen blow darts.

Now if you've never used a blow gun before, let me tell you it is pretty therapeutic. You load in a single dart which is like a long needle with a piece of plastic on the back end of it. And you load that into the gun which is this like three or two foot metal tube and you put that to about the amount that that are and that you momentarily gain this like new appendage, right? It's like a long proboscis and then you look down the length of your process. You just sit around until you see something of interest and then you blow really hard instantly there's a dart in it. I mean these things are made for hunting. I am not a hunter. And also they only gave me 12 darts. So I never took it outside. Not once this was an indoor blow gun. And for the rest of that year of school, I would go down into the basement with my 12 darts and my blow gun and I would just put them into the unfinished wooden walls for hours. It was a great form of catharsis for my otherwise nervous self. anxiety...dart in the wall. sadness...dart in the wall. scared of death ...dart in the wall. Scared of my crush...dart in the wall. Afraid of dying ...dart in the wall. Didn't do my math homework....

But every once in a while some exchange would happen on a blow a dart and it would just disappear and each time this happened I would freak out I would absolutely tear apart the basement trying to find it. But no matter what, no matter where I looked, every now and then. One of these darts would disappear, never to be seen again.

Eventually, the initial 12 dwindled to 11 dwindled to 10. Then down to nine. I never found them and I hope to God no one else ever does either. After a year or two the novelty of owning a bloke on warfarin and the darts got dull, and I just stopped spending so much time in the basement. I started going to the school dances again but still didn't know what to do with my arms. But one time a different friend of mine asked me to slow dance and it was nice. I quit the math team started drawing more. And when I turned 16 My parents let me use our old green minivan so that I didn't have to wake up so early to catch the bus. I got interested in photography and then later college radio and then podcast, et cetera, et cetera. And then I realized I'm in my mid 30s. I feel very different from who I was as a 14 year old.

But 20 years later and I can still get a little bit worried that there's some really sharp darts still stuck deep in the carpet of my parents basement. And so for the sake of my own sanity here to kind of alleviate that stress, I've developed a theory and this is a theory that is a wrong theory, but still it helps me it has to do with this metaphor, right?

You see blowdarts and memories are really similar. They're sharp, can be painful, dangerous even but they dull over time. And sometimes you lose them. And sometimes the harder you look, the less likely you are to find them. And that's because of this phenomenon where on rare

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occasions the blowdarts can travel with such velocity they actually like shift matter a little bit and it can slip between the gaps and your basement walls and burrow out through the dirt and up into the sky where it catches a ride in the jet stream and where they can then orbit the globe sometimes for years on end. And that's why they may find you again. All these years later. Usually when you least suspect when you're deeply concentrated on moving little colored boxes from one side of the screen to the other. And that's when they might choose to come down. We as past your ear. knocking off a tiny little bit of skin and then poking you in the left half of your brain with an ancient memory of squash popcorn kernels on a linoleum floor. It's just a theory though.

Well my name is Jeff Emtman and I produced this episode of Here Be Monsters. Music came from The Black Spot and Serocell. I also used a number of royalty free loops to make some of the Music in this episode. That's from a company called Slate Digital. Thank you Slate Digital. If you like Here Be Monsters and support the show by becoming a patron on Patreon. For just \$3 a month you can help me pay my rent. Also, I post some exclusive things on the Patreon page. That's at [patreon.com/hbmpodcast](https://patreon.com/hbmpodcast). That also you can support the show without spending a dime. You can tell people about it. That's the main thing that really helps the show. I want a lot of people to hear it and not a lot of people know about this show. So if you liked the show, tell your friends also there's another way you can support the show that doesn't cost anything because it costs your boss money. If you have a cool boss, have them sponsor an episode for your company or their company or a project you're working on or something else. All the ads on this show come from people who listen. So if you want to tell the Here Be Monsters podcast audience something you do or something your boss does, fill out the form at [HBMpodcast.com/sponsor](https://HBMpodcast.com/sponsor). You can also follow the show on Twitter and Instagram at HBMpodcast that's all so thanks for listening. More episodes soon.