

[Transcript] No Such Thing As A Fish / 473: No Such Thing As Rice Babies

Hi everybody, Andy here.

Just before this week's episode, we wanted to announce our special guest.

It is the psychotherapist, author, columnist, presenter, you name it, it's Philippa Perry.

We are so thrilled to have had Philippa on the show.

She was on our comic relief special a few years ago and she was just so great and entertaining and interesting we had to have her back.

If you're interested in finding out a little bit more of Philippa's work, she has written a magnificent book called *The Book You Wish Your Parents Had Read and Your Children Will Be Glad That You Did*.

So do check that one out.

Her next book, available to be ordered now, it's out in a few months, is called *The Book You Want Everyone You Love To Read and maybe a few you don't*.

So we hope you enjoy the episode.

We certainly enjoyed recording it.

The other thing to say is that our British Library live show is coming up soon.

It's on Friday the 21st of April.

It's about animals.

Just wanted to throw a bit of mystery in there.

It's about animals.

It's an animal special to go with the British Library's new Animals Exhibition.

Anna of course is still away but we have a special guest for this show and that is going to be none other than Sally Phillips of *Alan Partridge*, *Smack the Pony*, *Green Wing*, *Miranda*, you name it.

She's going to be there and she's going to be our special guest.

We are very excited.

Live tickets in the room are completely sold out but there are streaming tickets available so wherever you are listening to this you can attend a glorious fish gig in the comfort of your own home.

Why not pop over to knowsuchthingasafish.com slash live or live, no one's ever really worked it out.

You will be able to get yourself a streaming ticket for the show there.

We hope you do so.

We hope you enjoyed this episode.

We'll see you soon.

Bye.

Hello and welcome to another episode of *No Such Thing as a Fish*, a weekly podcast coming to you from the QI offices in Covent Garden.

My name is Dan Schreiber, I am sitting here with James Harkin, Andrew Hunter Murray and Philippa Perry and once again we have gathered round the microphones with our four favorite facts from the last seven days and in no particular order here we go.

Starting with fact number one, that is Philippa.

Hi.

Child-rearing advice in the 17th century included tossing your baby up in a blanket to strengthen its nerves or firing pistols near it to boost its endurance.

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Okay, I'm just going to start by saying, in case you suddenly want to run away and think that's a brilliant idea, that if you toss a newborn into the air, it might break its neck because it's got no neck muscles and a very big head, so not a great idea.

Is there a minimum age at which tossing can commence?

When did you start tossing?

Well, we got quite personal, quite quickly didn't we?

I knew this would happen, bringing Philippa on.

Okay, if you're going to do something fun like toss somebody in the air, it's a great idea if you've got a bond and a relationship with them first.

So don't go up to a random baby and think, oh babies love this and toss them into the air, A, they might break their necks if they haven't got neck muscles in it yet, and B, you do that as part of an ongoing relationship and you have give and take with a baby.

Okay, so you can't exchange words, but you exchange looks and laughs.

One of the first games a baby likes playing, let's start general folks, is peek-a-boo.

Now that is really scary for a baby.

Especially when you fire a pistol at them.

Can we just drop the firing of pistols, yeah, don't do that, okay, peek-a-boo, right, it's really scary for a baby because they haven't got what we call object permanence.

So if mummy leaves the room, that's why baby goes, wow, because mummy doesn't exist anymore.

So mummy's gone forever in the baby's eye?

Possibly.

We haven't really got a concept of forever, but mummy is not there and we haven't got a sense of mummy ongoing in the other room yet, so it's pretty scary.

And so peek-a-boo, the baby thinks he disappeared for a second and that is, oh, the jeopardy.

And then when you arrive again, the relief is hilarious.

And then again, they want to play that again and again and again.

Now is the 17th century firing a pistol that we do in the, what we're in now, 22nd century or something, 21st century?

21st, yeah.

It's difficult for me to keep up.

I had to think.

I really had to think.

People might be listening to this in the 22nd century.

Oh god, there we go.

Of course they might.

Let's hope they are.

Can I ask, with the blanket tossing though, is this a case of, are we thinking of a laid out blanket where we're flinging a kid into the air, like fox tossing the old sport?

Yeah, because I wondered if it was wrapping in a blanket and tossing them up and down while they're wrapped.

While they're squaddled.

While they're squaddled.

Exactly.

I think it's that.

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I think it's the old, hold the blanket by the corners and then, you know, have the baby.

I think so.

If you're trying to strengthen their nerves, then it needs to have some jeopardy, I think.

I think chucking a baby in the air at all is jeopardy.

This thing about treating babies and children cruelly to make them stronger is a utter, a complete, nasty myth that people still cling on to.

My dear father, for example, when my daughter was about two years old and she'd just grown too large to stand up underneath the piano, she hit her head on the piano thing.

And I, of course, went to comfort her baby here, dear, dear, cuddle, cuddle, kiss, kiss.

My dad said, don't do that.

She'll hurt herself all the time so that she can get that sort of comfort.

You are rewarding her hurting herself.

He said.

And I went, oh my God, suddenly I realized why I needed 25 years of therapy.

No.

I know.

But is there a thing where if a small child, let's say, falls over, right, they will sometimes, if you're in the room with a small child and they fall over, they will sometimes give you a look as if they're kind of sizing up whether or not they're going to cry.

And if you react in a big way, they might say, oh, right, that is my cue to cry.

They're sort of engaging in it with you.

Whereas if you say, oh, there we go.

And then you sort of, you know, that helps them out for whatever.

It depends how frightened you are of the fall.

I mean, sometimes you see a fall and you think that doesn't hurt that much.

That's what I mean.

And so you go, whoopsie daisy, and we all go whoopsie daisy.

But, you know, when they're covered in blood and there's a size of an egg on the head,

I think they're there, darling.

That must hurt.

Yeah.

It isn't too bad.

Okay.

Good call.

That's the distinction.

Yeah.

I say to my son, Wilf and Ted, my sons, when they're scootering, if they fall over, I say, oh, that was an amazing blooper.

Because we sometimes film.

And then so...

You're after those 250 quids for a new big frame, don't you?

Do it again in slow motion.

My camera's not working in slow motion.

But Wilf came home one day, scratched up and he said, dad had an amazing blooper today.

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So it kind of helps in a way.

So something else here as well is that children won't cry with people they don't feel particularly safe with.

Like, one day, my daughter had a quite a nasty fall in the playground and the teachers were all saying to me when I went to pick her up, like, oh, she was so brave.

She didn't cry.

She didn't make a fuss.

And I looked at her and think, that's not like her, weird.

And so I went, okay, goodbye.

Okay, good.

We walked around the corner away from the school as soon as we got around the corner.

I really hurt myself really badly.

And it was just delayed comfort.

She didn't want comfort from the teachers.

She wanted comfort from me.

And I'm not saying you're putting it on because you didn't do that at the time.

Bollocks, you just felt pretty sad about having fallen over.

And that was incomplete.

That sort of like, I feel sad, I need comfort.

And so whenever a child wants comfort, give it.

Never mind this thing about, but they're doing it for attention.

Yes, they are.

And that means you need to give attention.

Because once they've had enough attention, that's then and only then, that you learn to internalize the comfort you get from your loving ones so that you can tell yourself things like it hurts now, but it won't hurt in a minute.

You learn those things, you learn to comfort yourself.

If something awful happens to me, like, I don't know, I get my credit card pocket pick.

That's the blooper of today, or something like that.

That's a great blooper.

I want to ring up either my husband or my daughter and go, wow, wow, wow.

I spent all morning on the phone and getting things cancelled, it's been really horrible.

And I just want them to go there, there.

So even when we're quite old, I'm 65, we still need some external comfort for big bloopers.

And I'm expecting when I have my hip hop in a few weeks, I'm expecting a lot of sympathy from you lot, please.

So from the sound of it, Philippa, you don't agree with, I've been looking up historical childcare advice and parenting manuals and things like that.

There was a manual in the 15th century by Giovanni Domenici, who said that ideally, he did subscribe to Tuffening Children Up when small, dress them in rough clothing, get them to sleep in the cold, the worst of all, with old food and wine.

Oh, not wine.

No, that's the last straw.

Get child services out there right now.

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Yeah, yeah.

I mean, if you were sort of left out in the cold with no comfort, I think the least you could have would be a bit of wine to numb the pain.

Nice pickpool.

Nice, wouldn't it?

I'd be interested in the history of childcare, whether it kind of goes in cycles of kind of hard love and soft love, or whether we think we've kind of got to a point now and hopefully it'll kind of stay like this.

Well, it is still going in a cycle, really, because we tend to do things in extremes.

So we go from, we must be authoritarian at all times and don't let them get away with anything to, hey, free, easy.

And then we think, oh my God, those kids have got no boundaries.

They don't know where they are, who they're allowed to be or anything.

They're all over the place.

They've gone mad.

We better toughen up again.

Yeah.

We tend to swing like that, but of course, after everybody's read my book, they'll find the middle way where you have love plus boundaries, can't go wrong with that.

Nice.

Hugs and guns.

It's cool.

It's not called that.

So when you had children that was some years ago, as in when they were tiny, how old are your children now?

They've sort of grown up.

30.

So were you, by any chance, I don't know if he was still big then.

He was a Spock reader, Dr. Benjamin Spock.

No.

No, he was a bit before that, wasn't he?

Yeah.

Because I was reading about him and there was like this whole debate about, you know, tough love versus soft love and all of this because his books were still being published, you know, new editions in the late 90s, which is the only reason I asked, but he published his first in 1946 and it sold 50 million copies by the time he died.

Right.

Damn, I've only sold two million.

I've got to wait again.

Wow.

That is embarrassing.

Yeah, I know.

Yeah, I bet he lived long and prospered after that.

Oh my God.

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Yeah.

Yes.

But this is the crazy thing.

He was blamed for the eventual children who grew up where their parents had bought the book in the mid-40s, you know, the first edition, because then in the late 60s he became a very prominent protester against the Vietnam War and he was very famously, you know, he was leading protests and he was told that his parenting style had led to permissiveness in the permissive society and that all these long-haired hippies protesting against the Vietnam War were basically his children, you know, and the parents brought them up in that style.

This is like the rider of Jaws then spending the rest of his life doing short protection stuff, you know, like going the opposite way for what he created.

Yeah.

Let's just stick to the middle way, shall we?

But he was a victim of Tough Love 2 as a child.

He wasn't allowed to have a banana until he was 12.

Interesting.

Really?

What's the goss there?

I have no more details than that.

I'm really sorry.

I did try to find that.

Well, the mind boggled.

Yeah.

This is a cool thing.

Parenthood during the pandemic was obviously an interesting thing.

If you had a baby during the pandemic, which I did, you...

It wasn't anything else to do, was it?

There was nothing else to do.

Why not make a baby?

Yeah, exactly.

But we had a thing where...

We made sourdough.

We made sourdough.

I had babies.

You obviously couldn't visit families and so on.

So in Japan, someone had this idea which worked really well, which was a pandemic rice baby.

So what you would do is you would send a picture of the baby, the face, to this company and you would send the weight of the baby.

They would make a rice bag the exact weight of your baby with the face on it and send it to the parents or the auntie or uncle or whatever.

And so while you were doing calls or whatever, they could hold the rice baby and sort of feel like they had...

No, the rice baby's fallen into a pound of boiling water.

Oh!

It doesn't matter.

I've been tossing the rice baby up into the air in a blanket with terrible results.

So the company did this and it worked really well.

And then this is now a sort of growing trend in Japan.

At weddings now, there's an opposite baby that gets handed to the parents of the bride and the groom, which is...

Opposite baby.

As in...

Sorry.

Very old man.

No, sorry.

What I mean is what you do is you would get a picture of say like James and his wife would get pictures of themselves as kids and then they would have them printed onto a rice baby and you would give yourself as a child back to your parents to say, where I am now, this is where I came from and you made me, this is a present to remind you of the journey that we've been on.

Well, it's a beautiful ritual.

I think we should all integrate that into our lives.

Put it in your new book.

No?

Okay.

If you write another book, Dan, all right, you keep your ideas for your book and I'll keep mine for more.

Rice babies is going to be a best seller, I'm telling you.

No, it's got to be a more British kind of food.

Yeah.

It's got to be a classic British food.

It's got to be a...

Chips.

...suit, chip favourite.

Yeah.

Chips, chippy baby.

Yeah.

Yeah.

It's nice.

Yorkshire pudding.

Don't keep so well, do they?

Chips.

I was reading about when child care manuals started, when they first took off, because there were a few in the Middle Ages, but not very many and there wasn't mass literacy in the same way.

And it was partly, and this is particularly in America I'm talking about, it was partly because people were moving around more.

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So you might be living 200 miles from your parents and your immediate family.
So you don't have the immediate experience of a baby, you know, you haven't grown up in loads of babies, people were moving around for work.
Bit like nowadays, really.
Yeah.
And so manual is a very useful thing.
Like the old time NCT group.
Exactly.
It really is.
Yeah, yeah, yeah.
And that's when the manuals kicked off in a big way.
And now, of course, there are so many, you know, thousands of manuals for everyone.
But there's only one you really need to find, okay?
Rice babies by Dan Shriver.
Okay, it is time for fact number two, and that is my fact.
My fact this week is that France has lost at least two of its kings due to death by walking into the frame of a very low door.
This is two that we know of.
There may be more.
To lose one king by walking into the frame of a very low door.
You know what?
At first I thought that was a to lose joke.
Yeah, to lose.
As in La Trek.
Oh, I was thinking the southern French town.
Both would have been better than what I was doing.
That's cool.
Yeah.
So which ones are we talking?
We're talking Louis III, who passed away in 882, the 882.
And then Charles VIII.
I'm presuming not the same door.
Different door.
No, it's not.
No, there's no incriminating door here.
Yeah.
Horrible.
The killer door.
It waits.
It looks.
Well, it's a bit of inbreeding the old French royal family, because, you know, they had another one, didn't they, who thought he was made out of glass.
Yes.
Was that a French one?

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Was that a British one?

No, it was a French.

Well, I think it was one of the Charles' who suffered very badly.

No, no.

Charles the Mad, for some reason.

Yeah.

But inbreeding couldn't make you walk into a door frame.

Well, maybe you were brought up not to look where you were going.

Oh, almost.

I guess if you're the king.

Maybe the French royals had a person who would always tell you whenever you're about to hit a door frame.

Yeah.

And it was his day off.

Yeah.

What a day.

So funny.

He took two days off in over 500 years.

So Charles the Eighth, his reason for running into the door was he was very excited to see a game of tennis.

So he was rushing out the door, didn't notice the height, you know, when you're rushing out the door and you don't notice the height of a door, you can, you can crack your head.

No.

Tennis has killed quite a lot of royals.

Has it?

Over the years.

Yeah.

So Louis the Tenth of France died of a chill after paying tennis on a cold day.

James the First of Scotland drowned in a storm drain that he was using to escape assassins.

Yeah.

But the drain was blocked by tennis balls.

And so he couldn't get out and he drowned.

It's hard to blame that on the tennis balls, really, isn't it?

No, but they'd be called to the stand, definitely.

Yeah.

And it would be especially ironic for him if he had been the one playing tennis and saying, shall we go and get those balls?

No, I can't be bothered.

They're in the storm drain.

That's a good ironic.

And Anne Boleyn was watching a tennis match at Hampton Court when she was arrested and beheaded.

Again.

Wow.

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Not fair to blame tennis.

So even if she'd been watching a squash game, they might have still arrested a bear, isn't it?

You're right.

But that's a great connection.

That's a great connection.

And they're courts.

Courts and courts.

That's a...

Oh, I see.

Yeah, that's clever.

The other guy, by the way, Louis the Th- the other guy, King Louis the Third, was chasing a girl into a house and she obviously bent and he didn't.

Oh, she might have been shorter than him.

Yeah.

Yeah, she could have been shorter than him.

Is it true that the reason doors did use to be short is not because people obviously were smaller, but because materials cost so much that it made more sense to have less material for a wooden door?

I believe it might have been because of the heating.

So if you have a smaller door, it keeps the heating more.

Okay, right.

I don't know about that, but...

Also makes you think before you enter.

Yeah.

It'll be a good idea.

Hmm.

Yeah, that's a good point.

In Hawaii, I suppose they had low doors because they did that.

Oh, yeah.

Well, Manny Hopkins wrote about that, didn't he?

In his...

Yeah.

It was beautiful.

Limbo limbo.

Lovely.

Yeah.

So, I mean, yeah, that's okay.

Three lost to the tennis court.

One Venn diagram overlap of two lost to low doors, the lintels of a door.

That's it.

Yeah, because kings wouldn't die of normal things that normal people would die of have like...

Like syphilis.

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Well, syphilis, maybe they would, but yeah, as in they're more likely to die of weird things. It was obviously a much more dangerous time in terms of overall mortality, and I don't know if kings live longer or shorter than the average person.

They must have lived longer because they were better fed.

Better fed, yeah.

They might have been washed occasionally, at least twice a year.

Yeah, but you have more kind of aristocratic accidents and things like that.

Yeah, because you've got more horsing and hustling, and certainly in France they did have a lot of aristocratic accidents at the end of the 18th century, didn't they?

Yeah, loads.

Yeah, they really racked up.

Horses were a big one.

Prince Philip of France, he died when supposedly he was going through the streets and his horse tripped over a black pig that was running out of a dung heap.

That's bad luck, isn't it?

That's bad luck.

Yeah.

There was another one who rode a horse off a cliff, if you remember.

That's just careless.

Yeah.

It was easy to do.

I almost ran off a cliff.

On a horse?

Not on a horse.

You almost ran off a cliff, sorry?

Yeah, in Australia, I was going to the beach, and I saw the beach in the distance, and I didn't have my glasses on me, and I just ran and ran and ran.

And as I got to the edge of the cliff, I dove to the ground and managed to stop myself just.

I don't know why you've been let out at all.

That's incredible.

Have you, it's easy to do.

Have you heard of Carlo Man the second of West France here?

Actually, no.

Can you tell me all about him, please?

I only know about his death, sadly, but it's an unusual death.

He died after being stabbed in the leg by his servant, Bertoltus, while they were being attacked by a wild boar.

That just feels like a real miscommunication that's happened along the way.

Can you just say that again slowly?

He was stabbed in the leg by his servant while they were being attacked by a wild boar.

So at this point, we've got two low hanging door deaths.

We've got three horse deaths.

We've got three tennis court deaths, and we have now two pig based deaths as well.

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That's interesting.

There's a lot of grouping going on here.

Yeah.

Do you know any other pillow fight deaths than the one I'm about to tell you?

Oh, well, Martin Luther King had a pillow fight the day before he died, but it wasn't what killed him.

Yeah.

I think it might even have been the day of.

It might have been like one of the last things he did.

Can you start from the beginning?

I think you'll hear this show would implode on itself.

So Charles II of Iowa, who was the son of Francis I, he and his friends came across a load of buildings that had been closed off due to the plague.

And he said to his friends, no son of a king of France has ever died of plague.

And so they went into these houses that have been closed off and they sort of rolled around on the beds and had a pillow fight, sleaze those beds, well, full of, yeah, full of not nice stuff.

And sure enough, a couple of days later, he contracted the plague and he died.

That's a bad that's hubris.

That's really hubristic.

Yeah.

It's bad.

Louis the ninth of also a France buried in Notre Dame.

So getting quite eminent now, you know, buried and now cremated due to the recent fire.

Oh, yeah.

Too soon, Phillip, too soon.

He's about five years.

There's a theory that he died because he refused to eat the local food when he was traveling.

Okay.

Starved?

No, it's worse than that.

He was leading the eighth crusade in 1270 AD.

Oh, that one.

And he supposedly refused to have any vegetables because it was, you know, some foreign muck and he only wanted.

He only wanted old sausage back two years old from home.

And he had terrible scurvy, we think, and didn't take any vegetables from the surrounding countryside.

That's a slightly, slightly simplified version of it.

Well, he wouldn't have known, of course, that that was what caused scurvy.

Absolutely.

Yeah.

The arrogance you get from being royal is really dangerous, isn't it?

You think you won't get plague, you think you don't need vegetables.

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Do you think as a therapist that you would ever accept a case of a royal?
Would it be very fascinating or too, too daunting?
I couldn't possibly say.
What?
What?
Oh, don't be stupid.
Harry.
No.
Don't be dumb.
Okay.
Keep going.
Charles the mother of the bar.
That's the word.
He was called Charles the sign until he went to see a friend of the bar.
No, I haven't seen a royal.
It's not fun, therapising very famous people.
Yes.
Because the point of knowing very famous people is to gossip about them and, you know, on pain of death.
Are you wrong?
So it's no fun at all.
I've always wondered if I, I've, I'd like to have a therapist, but I want to, I almost feel like this needs therapy in itself.
I would want a therapist who I found who is a famous therapist.
Wow.
Yeah.
Anyway.
I mean, we could analyse why you want to see a famous therapist, but I'm not going to do that in public.
Okay.
I can give you a clue.
He's just obsessed with famous people.
But it's not that I want, I want, there's something interesting about them being famous and then becoming a therapist.
I don't know.
There's something interesting to me.
I'll shorten it.
There's something interesting about your projection onto that.
There's nothing interesting about the therapist themselves.
Yeah.
That's right.
There you go.
There we go.
Okay.

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That's done.

So that saved you a lot of trouble.

Whoa.

What's this?

Immediate invoice.

What's going?

Five thousand.

Jesus.

Anyway, back to kings, back to kings.

Here's the thing.

So this is, James, you mentioned the French Revolution as it happened and so after the deaths of Louis the 16th, wasn't it, a Marie-Antoinette, there was a son, they had a son who would have been Louis the 17th, who had very sadly died, but this wasn't really widely known in France at the time.

And there was this spell where dozens of imposters came out of the woodwork claiming to be the missing dofan.

And this word spread, and this is a really rare word, it's called the faux dominaphaumani.

I wonder why that stayed rare.

Faux dominaphaumani.

Faux dofanani.

Faux dofanani.

Meaning the...

And faux, meaning false.

Yeah.

I think it didn't bother with the other services.

But faux dofanamani, I just love that, and they had varying degrees of success.

Some of them were very clearly, one of them was Native American, and still managed to succeed actually.

He was called Reverend Eliezer Williams, who did persuade some people.

Charles II of Navarre, he was known as Charles the Bad.

He was sick and he was wrapped from head to toe in bandages soaked in brandy.

Oh, you might absorb some of that.

That would be nice.

That would be a good way of getting your kicks, wouldn't it?

Unfortunately, he was placed next to an open flame.

Oh no.

Oh no.

And he...

They're not bright, are they?

They're not bright.

No.

This French royal family at all.

Cos I think it's fair to not know that vegetables cause scurvy, but I think at that stage everyone knew that...

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That brandy is flammable.

Yes, I think so.

Gosh.

But what I like about him, his mother was Joan II, who was the Queen of Navarre.

And in 1328, she lost the areas of Champagne and Brie.

Careless.

Of all the areas of France you want to lose, you don't want to lose those two besties.

No, you really don't.

The brandy one, so the brother of King Richard III, his death was he was to be executed.

And so he asked that as part of his execution, could he be drowned, but could he be drowned in a barrel of Malmsey wine?

So that was his death.

His choice.

Yeah.

So he...

Yeah.

But he...

That's...

Yeah.

That was his way out.

A legend, obviously.

Yeah, yeah.

Speaking of kings being dipped in unusual liquids.

Oh, yes.

Yeah.

Comfortably we found our way there.

Louis the 18th of France.

His death is not interesting, but his afterlife is fascinating.

So he was the first king to be disinfected, his body after death.

So he was washed with chlorides of lime, which slows down decomposition.

And it was so he could be presented to the public without odor.

And this was...

Smell limey, if anything.

Which would be nice.

I don't think it's that sort of lime.

It's not that kind of lime, sadly.

Careful when you go to a bar.

If you say, can I have some lime with my gin and tonic?

Yeah.

Don't get quick lime.

Don't get the one that...

No, quick lime is not...

Oh, no.

Yeah, okay.

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All right.

Oh, boy.

Anyway.

Another tragic death.

It's not even a French royal.

Okay, it is time for fact number three, and that is Andy.

My fact is that the Natural History Museum's collection of whale bones is so significant they won't tell anyone where it is.

So this is this bizarre installation that the Natural History Museum's got.

And it's...

And where is it?

I don't know.

Come on, Andy.

Tell us.

It's secret.

It's really secret.

What's so valuable about whale bones?

Well, it's an amazing archive of all sorts of species.

So it's not only whales, it's dolphins, porpoises, and it's one of the most complete collections in the world.

And they get a lot of bodies postmortem if there have been whales or dolphins stranded.

They get the skeleton in the end.

And what it means is if you have the skeleton, you can study all kinds of things about it.

You can study diet.

You can study the habitat.

I know where they live.

They live in the sea.

I mean, you're not selling it to me, this place.

Well...

But also...

That's a good point, yeah.

Which is where this guy who set up this place should go back to.

Release some real estate wherever it is, mate.

Well, the things we do know about it, the secret location, supposedly it's behind a 10-foot tall door.

So we can assume it's not in old France.

Oh!

It's not for the French or the family.

That's great.

10-foot tall.

Is that because some of the bands are just so huge, they need to...

Oh, I guess so.

I mean...

No, actually, they might be tall and long, but if you put them the other way up, you

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can get them through the door.

Yeah.

You know?

But it's a good point that the article, which this came from, which is a Guardian article in the Journal somewhere around, does not answer the question, why is it secret?

As in, okay, great, it's the biggest complete collection and so on.

Just security.

Who?

But no one's going around trying to steal.

Who?

Maybe the Smithsonian, right?

Who have the other largest collection.

Did you see their collection?

No, no.

Is that secret as well?

It's not...

Actually, they're a bit more confident.

I think they publicly list the location.

They have more animals.

They have more individual animals, so 10,000, and they also...

This is incredible.

They have the largest blue whale jawbone ever found, which means that that is the largest bone of any animal ever found on the planet in its entire history.

Wow!

It's bigger than dinosaurs.

The blue whale is the biggest animal ever to have lived, and that's the biggest bone in the biggest animal, and they have it.

Wow, so cool.

I find that interesting that the biggest bone in a whale is its jawbone, actually.

I don't know why I find that interesting, but that is...

Good point.

Not in humans.

No, you're right.

No.

Well, it wouldn't be the pelvis on a whale, would it?

No.

On the femur.

They've got big pelvises, though.

Have they?

Oh, yeah.

Oh, yeah, they have.

Oh, their pelvises are so interesting.

I thought they sort of tapered off towards the end.

My bad.

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Well, because there's this whole thing that they have vestigial pelvises, right?
These legs that have... when they were walking on land, and then they didn't need them all.
So you can see...
And then they went back in the sea.
They went back in the sea.
They got out of the sea, and then someone said, get in the sea, and they went back in the sea.
Yeah, I think it was Philippa Perry from...
Yeah, so the story that I read, and this is from 2014, what they've noticed is a correlation between the size of the pelvis and the testes and penis, and they think that with the muscles in between, the pelvis is basically used as a manoeuvring object for when they're having sex in the sea.
It's a thruster.
Yeah, it's a thruster.
It's a gripper.
It's a...
It's a controller.
It's a controller.
Exactly.
The more convoluted the pelvis is, the better control the whale will have over its penis, and that means that if it's a... but you can tell how promiscuous the species of whale is by the shape of the pelvis.
That is fascinating.
Because a more convoluted one means more control, which is a function.
In the animal kingdom, do you think, or in the mammal kingdom?
Are you just thinking about your own pelvis right now?
I can't think of anything else.
I've got a lot of sense about me.
Yeah.
But this ought to be for sigil, isn't it?
And this is the thing that we talk about, but they still use...
And also for the female whales, they think that it's possibly used for controlling the clitoris.
But we can't see that because we don't have any of the bones or anything that remain, and we don't have scanners in the ocean, so how can we see whales having sex?
We're trying to do things where they can, you know, mock up CGI, but that hasn't been done yet.
Do we know how whales have sex?
Very, very carefully.
No, that's hedgehogs.
Sorry.
Like most mammals would do it doggie-style, right?
I think it's like that.
Yeah.

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I'm not sure.

I mean, one of your facts in the first ever episode of Fish was about grey whales having sex in threesomes.

That is true.

And there's always... which means there's always a spare penis, just flopping.

I always find that's handy.

I was just on this.

I was reading the other day.

One thing with the whales is quite often some... a lot of the ones that we have in the museum kind of washed up, right?

They washed up on the beach and then we collected them and put them in museums.

And this is the thing that humans do, which is when a whale kind of goes on a beach, we decide that we need to clean it up.

And there's a few... lots of different reasons.

One, they smell terrible, but two, they attract sharks.

So if you've got a dead whale, sharks love it and you get more sharks in the area.

Right.

So we're reading an article in... what's that magazine that we all like online that's about the sea?

Hackeye.

Hackeye.

Yeah.

And they were saying that basically a beached whale was a really important ecosystem before humans used to take them all away.

In 2020, there was a whale that washed up on a Dutch island and they left it there and they found it was visited by 57 species of beetle and 21 of them had never been seen in that area before.

So they just kind of came out of the woodwork and got on this.

And in Russia, they found a whale in the North Coast and they found that 180 polar bears were eating on this single carcass.

But of course now, as soon as a whale gets washed up, we get rid of it and it means that all these animals don't have their massive bounty that they would have otherwise had.

Because it is amazing, even not on land, but in the ocean, when a whale dies and it falls to the bottom, that's the beginning of a new city basically.

Yeah.

It's an extraordinary thing.

I think that every kind of life coming and living there, it's like dropping a skyscraper down.

How long do blue whales live, the biggest creatures?

Is it 200 or 300 years?

It's a long time, isn't it?

I think it's well over 100.

Yeah.

Yeah.

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Why?

I'm just interested.

Usually, the larger an animal is, the longer it lives, right?

Generally speaking.

Yeah.

Yeah.

And I think we've said before, there are some whales alive today that were alive before Moby Dick was written.

Blimey.

Right.

Yeah.

That was an interesting thing about whales, which is that they have more cells, so you think they would get more cancer.

And you would think that the bigger an animal is, the more cancer it should get because it has more cells that could go wrong, but that doesn't happen and we're not sure why.

Maybe we need to study the bones and find out.

Yes.

If only we could find these.

If only we had a depository of a massive about a whale bone somewhere.

Can I tell you, this is a pretty on topic for me.

I found an article, headlined Whale Bones, the world's most endangered bryophyte habitat.

Bryophytes is another word for mosses and it is an article in the British Bryological Society Journal.

I love this.

This is by a guy called Jeff Duckett, right?

He's written a while ago now and he says, however many times you've seen them, there is always a certain enchantment at finding members of the splachnaceae on dung, pellets and rotting cadavers.

This is a particular family of mosses.

The stimulus for my present study was the chance discovery of tetrapallodon manoides growing on a decades old whale skeleton, the centerpiece in an Icelandic garden.

What was initially supposedly a bryophyte free holiday on Iceland then turned into a systematic search for mosses on whale bones.

Imagine his wife.

She's like, we're going to go to Iceland.

There can't be any moss in Iceland.

He's like Poirot.

Where Poirot always goes on holiday.

There's a murder.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Oh my God.

Can I get down my favorite book?

Yes, please.

Wow.

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I can get a favorite book.

Whales bones.

Wow.

We've mentioned this very briefly on the podcast before, but it's called Whales Bones of the British Isles.

And like we only mentioned it a couple of hundred episodes ago, so I think it's right for a reread.

Oh, it was episode 28.

So please can I mention this a second time?

It's by Nicholas Redmond and his son and they are father and son team.

They spent 30 years traveling the UK just finding whale bone arches.

This was a huge thing in the 19th century.

You'd make an arch out of a whale's jaw bone and they used to be a very famous one in Edinburgh.

It's sort of solo standing that was sort of like out in the field.

Or a pub sign, look at that.

The signboard of this public house in Downham is supported by a whale's jaw bone.

They were used.

They are big.

Those jaw bones.

They're massive.

They were used for fencing.

And what they showed was the jaw bone went to the just above the height of the actual pub itself.

Yeah.

So that's how tall it is for someone who's imagining it.

Yeah.

And the fence posts and crane hoist supports, I'm just reading a list of different users now, footstools, milking stools, benches, stepping stones.

Amazing material.

Yeah.

So and yeah, this is just this book is such a labour of love.

This is why the bit of the museum that houses the Whales Bones has to be top secret because it's such useful material and we'll start building houses out of them if we find where it is.

This secret room.

So the person who runs the secret room, or at least as the head curator who seems to be asked about a lot is Richard Saban.

And I actually met Richard years ago.

I went for a tour of the natural history.

Where?

Where?

Yeah, exactly.

An industrial state off the M1 that he just by chance wanted to meet you at.

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Where?

Where?

10 foot door.

Okay, it is time for our final fact of the show and that is James.

Okay, my fact this week is that Jared Manley Hopkins once had nothing to drink for a week for a bet.

He only stopped when his tongue went black.

Good.

He did that at school, I think.

He did.

Yeah.

And he went to school high gay.

High gay.

Yeah.

And he had more liquids than the body needed.

Everyone was drinking too much, that's why he decided.

And people said, no, no, what do you mean by that?

And he really stuck by his guns and he said, no, I reckon I can go without any liquids for at least a week.

Okay, so he did this bet with one of the other boys and not only his tongue went black, but he also collapsed and, you know, in the middle of a, you know, pee.

Yeah, pee would be the time you would collapse.

Yeah, absolutely.

But the headmaster who was called John Bradley Dine, he sort of really punished him and he was forced to return the money, you know, because he got, they guys said, well, you know, you've done pretty well, so I'm going to give you the money, but he was forced to give it back.

And he complained that he was being punished more than the other boy, because not the other boy, they both got punished, but he also had to give the money back and just made the headmaster hate him even more and he got, you know, he had a bit of a bad time at high gay.

He was a very original thinker and authority, like many teachers don't like that.

They just want obedient children that don't ask too many questions and I expect he really irritated all his teachers because he was probably cleverer than they were.

But the thing with the liquids, yeah, isn't there a theory that if you ever have a pee or shows you've been drinking too much, I said, you know, I should have cut down on drinking earlier.

You look like champagne, not stewed tea, whereas if you're not drinking very much, it will look like stewed tea.

Mine is in cubes.

Is that a problem?

It's probably a problem when you're squeezing it out.

Yeah.

Okay.

No, so he didn't think that.

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He just thought, it's a weird thing to decide that people are drinking too much as in it's a weirdly.

I mean, he'd been at just a school argument that got out of hand, right?

He did the same thing with salt, didn't he?

He had stayed from salt for a week for the same reason he wanted to show.

Yeah.

But what I think this shows is that he could steer his mind rather than just go with the flow and not be thoughtful and not be influenced.

He could decide where he wanted to go in life rather than just be blown about in the wind.

And these experiments who are doing, I think they're wonderful experiments on what can

I do?

What can my body do?

What am I capable of?

Yeah.

Should we say who he is?

Just quickly.

Yeah.

Because Phillip, you're a fan, aren't you?

Yeah, I did him for A level.

I got a crush.

And I bet he was gay, actually.

I was just thinking about this now and I'm feeling slightly disappointed that I wouldn't have stood a chance.

I'm afraid from the research he absolutely was, yeah.

Oh, damn.

Just quickly, it's like a really, really famous Victorian poet.

Oh, yeah, that.

He was a friend of Robert Bridges.

Another poet.

Yeah, that's right.

And he was sort of like late 19th century, wasn't he?

Yeah.

And I realise that's a very famous poet.

And he invented something called sprung rhythm, which is, I caught this morning's, morning's, minion, dappled dawn, drawn high there on a wimpling whim.

Do you see what I mean?

Oh, yeah.

The words dance.

The words dance.

It's sort of.

And where did you go there in terms of, if I was reading that on the page, am I on a third line or was that one line?

I can't remember.

Right, but.

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But it's not a big pentameter where you've got five feet, ba-bum, ba-bum, ba-bum, ba-bum, ba-bum, ba-bum, ba-bum.

Yeah.

Ba-bum, ba-bum, ba-bum, ba-bum.

It can go on forever and seems to fly like the birds he's talking about.

Yeah, it's very jazzy.

Yeah.

And I was very taken with it as a keen A level student and he made me cry.

I loved him so much.

It was just so beautiful.

And he never got to see any of it because he wasn't published until post his death 30 years after his death.

He never got fangirled by me, which he's probably quite glad about.

He was very slightly Hawaiian.

Really?

Tell me more.

Well, he had a strong Hawaiian connection in his life.

Basically.

He wasn't personally Hawaiian himself.

His uncle used to live there, right?

Can you let me tell the story again?

Right.

He just had a lot of pineapple in his throat.

He had a favorite pizza.

His dad was the Hawaiian Consul General in London.

And you write down, yes, his uncle Charles had moved to Hawaii, but had fully learned the language and had established an Anglican bishopric in Honolulu.

So I think he had lived there.

And then I think his father, who was called Manny Hopkins, that was his dad's name.

The son was Gerald Manny Hopkins, must have visited and been and sort of become the representative.

I just think that's cool.

You don't think of that with Manny Hopkins.

Well, because his family were Protestant, like you say.

But then he just decided he was going to become Roman Catholic, didn't he?

And he was already writing some amazing poetry at that time.

But when he became Roman Catholic, he decided to burn it all.

Oh, yeah.

I'm just going to get rid of everything.

I'm just going to stop becoming a poet.

I'm just going to never do any poetry.

I'm going to get rid of all my poetry.

I just don't understand that split with his parents because his parents sound really cool because they encouraged his original thinking.

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And his mother was unusually highly educated for the time and also encouraged him.
And do you think he went Roman Catholic because that's easier to be gay
so you don't have to get married like you might if you're an angry conman?
We do know that he went so like when he converted, he was trying to come home to see his family
and so on for Christmases and stuff like that.
And there are letters that sort of show that he would write to his dad saying,
is it okay that I come back to the house?
Because he changed his...
Yeah, because the worry was that, and this was the condition,
yes, you can come home, but absolutely by under no means can you convert your brothers and
sisters to your religion.
So he had to promise he would not do that when he came back home.
So it wasn't a complete rift as I'd been led to believe.
It might have turned into that, but certainly for the first two Christmases after this letter,
he was allowed to go back home and do that.
You have to wear a lei like everyone else at Christmas.
You have to say hello to her like all the rest of us.
Oh, I know it is running a bit slow.
Can I just say about when he burned everything?
So he burned everything at the age of 24.
As in everything he wrote before the age of 24, he burned.
And it was as you say, James, because he got faith.
And he gave up creativity because he couldn't reconcile his faith with his creativity.
So he gave up writing for seven years and became a Jesuit.
But what's the one thing you would do before becoming a Jesuit?
So one thing is not allowed.
You want to have one last crazy blowout?
Yeah.
Have a wank?
Well, yeah.
He did like orgasm.
You can see a lot of metaphor for sort of orgasm things in the poem.
Who is other?
Well, he used to note that.
We'll get back to yours in a second.
But he used to note that in his diary.
There was a secret code.
He used to say OH, which was old habits.
And the old habits was having a wank.
Well, it might have just been saying, oh.
So what did he do before surfing?
He ate a bit of fruit.
No.
He visited Switzerland, which banned Jesuits from entering the country.

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So he took his opportunity to visit Switzerland, which might be code as well.
So actually saying it now, it sounds like code.
Visited Switzerland again this morning.
Oh, I can't yodel.
His big first poem really sort of the one that he's largely known for these days.
I know.
I know.
Wreck of the Deutschland.
That's it.
Correct.
Yeah.
So he wrote that in, it was based on a shipwreck from the 1800s, 1875.
And he was inspired by a group of nuns who were on the shipwreck who sort of prayed to God as they were going down.
And that gave him the inspiration.
And he, as part of writing it, created this amazing new technique in poetry, which it was called...
Sprung rhythm.
Sprung rhythm.
And so he sent it.
He sent it into a Jesuit magazine called The Month to have it published.
And they rejected it.
And the article I was reading just had this really nice little sort of nugget of fact, which is that something that did make it into the Jesuit magazine as a poem was written by someone, a student, who identified himself as O-F-O, apostrophe F-W-W.
Any idea who that could be?
Gosh.
O-O-F-O.
F-W-W sounds like something to do with W-W-F.
Nice.
World Wrestling Federation.
Yeah, yeah.
As a wrestler as Hulk Hogan.
No, it's not.
So it's, uh, it's Oscar, Fingle, O Flattery, Wills, Wild.
It was Oscar Wilde's first ever published poem that made it into the Jesuit.
That's very nice.
Yeah, exactly.
Lovely.
Dan, I think you said Flattery instead of Flaherty.
Oh, did I?
Sorry.
Flaherty.
Yeah, Flaherty will get you nowhere.

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I really hope someone gave Oscar Wilde a fun little sign for his house saying Flaherty will get you nowhere.
Just for the loo or something.
It's just kind of cute.
That's amazing.
Oh, Flaherty.
Yeah.
So that was the, that was the Jesuit.
Sorry, no, that was the, that was the hinge moment at which Oscar Wilde got his break and, and Hawkins didn't.
Yeah.
Because you said nothing he wrote was published until 30 years after he died.
That's sort of true.
It's sort of the slightly untrue because Robert Bridges.
So who's that?
Robert Bridges.
He was a, he was an established poet.
I think they met as fellows at Oxford or something.
Yeah.
And he was someone who Manly Hopkins would go to in order to impress and say, can you help me out?
And he read this, this amazing poem that we were just talking about the wreck and he was like, I don't want to read that again.
That was painful.
That was really hard.
But he sort of post death became a champion of him.
And so he thought the writing style was so difficult that, that Hopkins was doing that he would publish six poems as a sort of teaser taster just to get you used to the rhythms of this guy before publishing his collected works 30 years after his death.
So there was a sort of like, you know, like putting out like a trailer episode of podcasts.
Yeah.
You know, it's, it was kind of like that.
He was also friends with Christina Rossetti, wasn't he?
Oh yeah.
Yeah.
She was also very religious.
She wrote in the Bleak Midwinter, for instance.
And I read one interesting book.
You made it sound like that was when she liked to write.
She wrote the Da Vinci code, but it was it.
But she, I read this about her, which is really interesting that she had a habit of stooping up to pick up stray pieces of paper in the streets in case they had the Lord's name on them.
Nice.
So there's a bit of paper and she's like, well, I don't want it blowing away if it says Jesus

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on it.

I don't want to pick it up just in case.

She was the first person to collect those shopping lists that people make blogs out of.

And she didn't like that.

So she goes, oh no, I'm just looking for Jesus.

Do you want to hear a few words that Hopkins invented?

Please.

Yeah, that's good.

InScape, which is the essential quality of something, of anything really.

Yeah.

Sort of essence of it.

When kittenfishers catch fire, meaning when you see that sort of flash of their, their colour, he meant that was like deep in the core of them.

And then it rippled out into the world, but it sort of came from their essence.

InScape is sort of like the essence of a thing.

Nice.

He also coined the word stressy.

Stressy.

Yeah, but he used it to mean poetry that is characterised by stress and rhythm on the words.

Brilliant.

And no one, he wrote it in private correspondence.

So he wrote it well before anyone else said, I'm feeling really stressy today.

Has anyone ever said that?

I don't think I've ever said stressy, actually.

Don't be so stressy.

Don't be so stressy.

I think I have.

People say it to me all the time.

The effect you have.

Shivlight.

That's another word by him.

Shivlight.

Shivlight.

So S-H-I-V-E light.

So it might be shivlight or shivlight in pronunciation.

Does that mean shimmery or something?

It's really beautiful.

You know when you're walking through a wood and the sunlight passes through a tree and it breaks the beams.

That's a shivlight.

The shivlight you see and what breaks through the beams.

And sillion is another word that he came up with.

It's the act of plowing a field and it's the sort of rich soil, the shiny soil that you

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get on a newly plowed field.

If he had something that he felt so deeply about that language could not describe, he just made his own language up for it.

So cool.

With his poems, I've had to have like a little glossary to tell you what it means or would it be clear?

Only in the A level notes which I deeply relied on.

Right.

His love life is very sad and thwarted basically because he seems to have been gay in love with one man who died very tragically young and then never really recovered from that.

He was in love with a young man called Digby Macworth Dolbin who I just, I like this fact about him.

I like it so much.

He was expelled from Eton.

Can you guess what for?

Wanking.

No.

It's not always the answer.

But it will be.

It will be.

It will be.

How are you on Nusterman?

Disorce.

Clean that chair.

Digby Macworth Dolbin was, he was expelled from Eton.

You're never going to get it in a million years for, for wandering the countryside dressed as a medieval monk.

That's right.

Shoeless.

That's so sweet.

Nice, isn't it?

I can see why you fancied him.

Yeah.

It was sort of like imaginary world living in, a little bit poetic, flowing robes.

Yeah.

I know.

And Hopkins confessed his love to his confessor because I think he was a feathered old earth and Dolbin.

And then the confessor said, well, you can't have any contact with him except by letter.

Oh, that's practically the same text as him now, isn't it?

Oh, oh, oh.

And then Dolbin tragically drowned just two years later, was age 19.

So young.

It's really sad.

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Oh, that was a bit of a creepy age gap, actually, but you know.
Yeah.
I was sort of glossing over that.
I think it sounded more doomed and romantic.
Yeah.
I'm sure we have enough.
Yeah, yeah.
Okay.
Yeah.
Can somebody read us just one poem?
Come on.
Sounds like you can.
Well, I do have one.
Spring and fall to a young child.
Margaret, are you grieving over golden grove?
Unleaving leaves like the things of man you with your fresh thoughts care for?
Can you?
Oh, as the heart grows older, it will come to such sites colder by and by nor spare a
sigh, though worlds of one would leaf meal lie.
And yet you will weep and know why.
Now, no matter child the name, sorrow springs are the same.
Nor mouth had nor mind expressed what heart heard of ghost guest.
It is the blight man was born for.
It is Margaret you mourn for.
Okay.
That is all of our facts.
Thank you so much for listening.
If you'd like to get in contact with any of us about the things that have been said
over the course of this podcast, we can be found on our Twitter accounts.
I'm on at Shriverland James.
At James Harkin.
Andy.
Andrew Hunter M.
And Philippa.
Philippa underscore Perry, I think.
I'm not sure.
It might just be Philippa Perry.
No, it's Philippa underscore Perry.
Okay.
Or you can go to our group account, which is at no such thing or a website.
No such thing as a fish.com.
All of our previous episodes are up there and do make sure more important than anything
else to look out for the future book of Philippa Perry.
Let's see if she can remember what it's called.

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The book you wish everyone you love would read and some of those you don't.

That won't be published for months.

No, not until October the 20th.

Yeah.

In the meantime, you could buy the book you wish you'll.

Oh, fuck.

I can't remember.

The book you wish your parents had read.

And your children will be glad that they did.

You did.

Fuck.

It's a long time since I've done any publicity for that one.

That's fine.

Rice Babies will also be available this coming fall by me, Dan Schreiber.

Otherwise, come back next week.

We're going to have another episode, another guest.

We'll see you then.

Bye.