

Meghan: Welcome. This is our second-ever episode of “An Incomplete History of Dance.” Um, I’m Meghan Varner, just like last time, and this is my dad Murlin.

Murlin: Hey there.

Meghan: [laughs] ok, all right. Dad, before we started recording you were like “what is the topic” and the topic is – drumroll – um, how ballet came to communist China in the 1950s and 60s and why it stayed. Because it did stay. Um...

Murlin: Hm.

Meghan: Yeah.

Murlin: Cultural Revolution.

Meghan: Yeah. Yeah, we’re getting into that stuff. Um. So, disclaimer – I know way more about the politics of 1950s China than I know about China in pretty much any other time period, and I don’t know that much about the politics of 1950s China outside of how it relates to ballet, so this is my disclaimer! I have done this research pretty much entirely from the lens of what was going on with dance. Um I don’t have a lot of other outside knowledge filtering into this, it’s specifically been from this view, so. Yeah. There’s a lot of politics in this one, though. So – [laughs] Be prepared for that. Um.

Sort of a place to start with this, um you have to understand the sort of like... social status that ballet has? Um especially in the 50s and 60s during this, um, Cold War era. It was this huge – I mean, ballet was always this status symbol from pretty much the moment it was made because it was something they did in the courts. But um, especially in the 50s and 60s, that was – ballet was something that countries were using to sort of say to the Soviet Union, because they were famous for ballet, “hey we are a player on this stage, our country is civilised, um – you can come trade with us and talk to us and there’s sort of... monetary value, almost? Monetary and political value in communicating with us.” Um. Countries that want Soviet attention start their own ballet schools in order to curry favour with the Russians. So, as you can imagine ballet in the People’s Republic of China began with Russian emigres, and the popularity increased as, um, political ties with the USSR increased cause it’s – yeah – that’s it, they’re like “hey look we got ballerinas” and they were like “oh hey ballerinas are cool,” so it’s a sort of back-and-forth feedback loop – I don’t know if that made sense. Did that make sense at all, Dad?

Murlin: No – I’m well no – um, I don’t know.

Meghan: Ok, I’m gonna rephrase. Um, you’ve got people in China saying, um, “I’m going to push ballet so that the Soviets see us and think ‘oh hey, these people like ballet too,’” and we’ve got, um, people in China also going “oh hey I’m seeing a lot of Russian stuff lately, including ballet, so now I’m interested.” So, it’s kind of a simultaneous purposeful thing and a reaction to what’s happening, as far as I can tell. There was... in 1954 they established the Beijing Dance Academy which was the first official ballet school, based closely off of Russian ballet schools and taught by Russian dancers. Uh, Chinese ballet dancers were initially trained in the Vaganova style which is just... a Russian form, if you couldn’t tell by the name and implications of the way I was saying that. It’s – it kind of echoes what was going on politically too, because at the time, uh, the Chinese had this, um, treaty with the Soviets – um – essentially, they had this plan that was modelled after what the Soviets did that emphasised industrialising their country. Um, a whole bunch of Soviets and other Eastern Europeans came to help implement that, which meant that China was basically economically dependent on the Soviet Union. In order to finance the project, they had to take out loans from the Soviets and then

they actually ended up paying more than they got out of [laughs while talking] what was happening. So, what that means in terms of ballet stuff, is that in addition to this sort of dependence on, like, the economics is they've also got this dependence on – all of their ballet stuff comes directly from Russians. And they don't really have their own balletic identity yet? And they're sitting here going "wait a minute, wait – this doesn't do anything for us. This is just like – the Soviets basically have power over us, they have control, um – what do we actually get out of this?"

And by, um – [quietly] uh, right I can't minimise that. Sorry, I'm like moving things around my screen. So, by 1959, Khrushchev's in charge. He's already said some stuff about um, Stalin that alienates Mao Zedong. And he wants a military presence in China. Um. They're like, um – this is the funniest thing about this. All right, here we go. So, Mao is like "you know what, we don't like Russians any more than we like the British" and since the British occupation is already over that's basically him saying "Get the hell out of here." But the funny thing about that is, um, in two years, by 1961... All the Russian teachers are gone because relationships with the Soviet Union have gone so badly... You know who comes in to teach ballet after the Soviet dancers are gone?

Murlin: No, no I don't.

Meghan: Ok.

Murlin: [chuckles]

Meghan: Um, I mean – I mean, you could guess.

Murlin: Um. Japanese?

Meghan: No. No.

Murlin: Bad guess?

Meghan [laughs] I don't think the Chinese would've gone – enjoyed that so much considering Japanese imperialism but like...[claps]

Murlin: true.

Meghan: To be fair I just say that, but they also had been the victims of British imperialism, like I said.

Murlin: Mm-hm.

Meghan: British teachers came in. [pause] Britain, of course, is on the other side of the Cold War at the moment. [laughs] Um. Mao's already been like "we don't like the Russians or the British," and yet it is British teachers that take over, um, and start to contribute to what eventually turns into its own special ballet school. Like, Chinese ballet is Chinese ballet and comes a lot from Chinese culture, um, and the history of – surrounding the Cultural Revolution. But initially the sort of style that sort of filtered into what it is today was Vaganova, then covered over with British school of ballet. Um. English style dance. So. Yeah. [claps] Um, that's where the seeds of that comes from. Um. Obviously, it's been a long time and I can't necessarily say what necessarily stuck around but that initial influence comes from these two powers that – both are places Mao said he didn't want in his country. So. [laughs] So, we've got the Russians leaving and British coming in to teach, and they've still kept ballet. Even after the Soviets are gone, even after they're no longer using it to say "we are important to you, um we should matter to you." So why keep ballet, is the question that comes up. If China's already rejected capitalism, is starting to reject all things western, period, um... If Mao is disdainful of the past, which he was; um, he is said to have believed that it had no value, whether it's

the past of China or other places around the world. He was like “I don’t want any of it, it’s all about the now and the moving forward” – Um. I have a lot of thoughts about that but I’ll get into those later. So why would ballet stick around becomes the question? Um, it’s Western; it’s super capitalist, the system of patronage that it started with, the whole monarchy, dance is super underfunded now because art is a commodity and I have a lot of thoughts about that but I’m not gonna get into it. [quietly and sarcastically] I have a lot of thoughts about everything, let’s be real. That’s why we’re here. Um. It’s super decadent too, which is kind of antithetical to Mao’s whole “the working proletariat,” like, “you don’t have any luxuries you just do your job” and... Ballet’s out here with the sparkles and the poofy tutus and all these big fancy things, especially at this time and having come from Russia. Because interestingly the Soviet Union didn’t get rid of a lot of those ballet aesthetics when they took over. Um. [pause] Hm. [pause] Sorry my brain’s wandering off on a path now. But –

Murlin: Uh – if I may.

Meghan: Yeah.

Murlin: China in the 60s became competitors with the Soviet Union.

Meghan: Mm-hmm.

Murlin: They wanted to be better communists than the original communists and so they wanted to outperform them in industry, in agriculture, and in arts.

Meghan: Ok. See, I had heard that about, you know, industry and agriculture and stuff, but I hadn’t actually heard that it extended to arts. That makes a lot of sense.

Murlin: Yeah, because you can take the ballet and make stories that push your political position.

Meghan: Yes, propaganda.

Murlin: The grand and glorious Chinese communist revolution, on the ballet stage.

Meghan: Yes, that’s exactly what happened. Heck, yes. Yeah, um – he had this –

Murlin: I remember my sixties.

Meghan: Whoo! I mean, yeah. I guess you’re [laughs] old enough to...

Murlin: [laughs] Thank you.

Meghan: Hey, I mean, it’s like me saying I remember my 2000s, but just... longer ago.

Murlin: There you go.

Meghan: [laughs] Um, so yeah. Mao had this later philosophy [dog bark] Um. Aw – little cameo by your dog there.

Murlin: Mm-hmm.

Meghan: So, he said use the past to serve the present and the foreign to serve China – I mean obviously that’s a translation – but anything and everything he decided that – he was like, “oh, I could use that for my propaganda, for my brand-new vision of what Chinese culture should be.” He’s like “mm, that’s ours now; it’ll, you know, push my agenda forward.” So, ballet was – actually ended up favoured over native forms of dance like – [quietly] hang on I’m gonna – I looked up how to pronounce this and I’m really sorry, but at least I mess up French. I just can’t pronounce anything that isn’t Spanish or English. Uh – *yangge*. Um, that’s the native dance form that I kept coming up

against when I was looking up this as well, like that one was specifically sort of pushed down, pushed aside, um, and ballet was elevated instead. Um, Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, didn't think there was enough images of the heroic proletariat in classic Chinese art forms, um, 'cause you know.

[sarcastically] Art should have images of one kind of person and one kind only! [laughs] I mean if – if you're doing propaganda then yeah, that's the only thing that works for you.

Um. So. The, um – the Cultural Revolution, that's between 1966 and 1976 usually, is how it defined – how it's defined. It's this idea of – he's got these education campaigns that are intended to, quote unquote, [sarcastically] remove corruption and restore, um, his politics of collectivisation – that's paraphrased from one of my sources, um, Laurence, if you look at my sources when you listen to this. So basically, what that means without the political babble, is Mao's just like, "hmm there's people who don't agree with me in government, so I'm going to tell all these young people to go out and 'purge' those so-called capitalist or elements of the bourgeoisie," or whatever. Um. Supposedly they've infiltrated the government and society, and that... violent class struggle was the way to do this. Um, I know we're focusing on this as a ballet thing but there were literally, uh, massacres... I was gonna say, the destruction of historical and cultural artifacts after that. That feels like I really just got out the big one first when I say massacre, but – it got... really, really bad.

Uh, I don't wanna understate this, like, I'm very, very focused on the ballet part of it but.

[uncomfortable laugh followed by pained sigh] It's... I... Yeah. There's a reason why Mao Zedong is not the most popular name. There was this student paramilitary group, the Red Guard, trying to fight what they called the "four olds", which were old thoughts, old culture, old customs, old habits. Um. And so artistic production because of all of this, like – "you can't look to the past, you have to be in line with what – you know, Mao's pushing" – um, artistic production was really restricted once the Cultural Revo – Revolution began. Um. They had their model works of art, which were curated by Mao's wife again, Jiang Qing. She comes up and up – [noise] She keeps coming – sorry. One more time. I'll make it this time. What are you doing, Dad?

Murlin: Images of Chinese ballet –

Meghan: Oh.

Murlin: – costumes. Very few tutus at all.

Meghan: Yes, yeah, um.

Murlin: Big pants, long flowing skirts, things like that.

Meghan: Mm-hmm, yeah. Uh. What was I saying? [quietly] Oh no I got distracted by me hiccupping –

Murlin: Sorry.

Meghan: – and seeing a thing. No, no, it's fine. I already had, like, failed at that sentence twice. Um, yeah. Jiang Qing comes up again and again because she was – she basically had her hands in all of this performing arts stuff. Um, she had eight quote unquote model dramas, um, two of which were ballets, and they were the works of art she felt most embodied revolutionary ideals and the goals of the government. So, um. [laughs] They... had been around for a while by the time they were announced as official model works, so to the people they've become nostalgic but only about as far back as Mao's willing to allow anyone. You know, like I said they elevated ballet over their traditional folk forms, which I think comes down to the fact that if you have your traditional folk forms, these are things that existed from before – um, before they take power, before the communist party was in charge which means that it might being back thoughts of how things had been and people might

be like “well wait a minute why isn’t it that way instead of this way?” Like, if I was trying to run a cult of personality over a really big country, I’d be making my propaganda out of stuff that’s relatively new, too, because you don’t want anybody to connect that back to what was before you.

Interestingly one of these model works of ballet, uh, “The White-Haired Girl,” was a story that had been put in a yangge dance before. Um, it’s one that’s been around forever. That is a folktale. But it has a lot of ideals that are really in keeping with what they were trying to push, uh, the heroic peasants rising up against their, um, tyrannical landlords, essentially. The story is – this is gonna be my really truncated version so bear with me – so this peasant girl, her father has run away from home to hide from debt collectors. And when he comes home in secret to celebrate this festival with his daughter, he’s found out, he’s killed, and she is taken away to be the landlords’ concubine. Um, her fiancé wants to go after her but he and a bunch of other villagers get told to go join the army because it’s propaganda. [laughs] Um, that comes back later, I swear it’s not just some random thing that happens in the middle of this. She’s out here being horrifically mistreated by the landlord and his mother. In revenge she takes the mother’s whip, beats her, ends up locked up because that happens if you beat your horrific abuser. Um, another servant of the landlord frees her and she ends up faking her own death in the river and running away to live in the mountains. Don’t we all sometimes wish we could do that.

That’s where the name “The White-Haired Girl” comes in because her life is so hard that her hair turns white. Uh, later on she ends up in this temple, the landlord comes in to the temple, and the lighting – ‘cause I think there’s a storm out – and her hair and her ragged clothes make him think that she is a goddess come to punish him for his evil deeds. So, you know he’s a jerk but at least I guess he’s self-aware? [laughs] Dude if you think it’s a good chance some goddess is gonna come punish you maybe just don’t be a jerk. Ah. All right. She throws a brass incense burner at him because why not get some more revenge, like I mean, why not. I would too, good for you. He runs away. The fiancé and the other army folks come back. They’ve fought against Imperialist Japan by the way in the meantime and the army overthrows the landlord as well. Uh the fiancé finds out the girl’s in the mountains, he finds her living in the cave, and they reunite while the landlord gets punished by all the angry peasants. So.

That’s the story. I’m gonna tell you the story of the other model work and you’re probably gonna notice some themes. Um, the other one is “Red Detachment of Women.” It’s ... that is gonna be the name that... um Chinese listeners who maybe aren’t super familiar with ballet are probably gonna be like “Oh, yeah. Oh yeah, that one.” Um, it’s really familiar – it was also, I think, a movie. Um, people will know some of the music, um, they’ll know how the story goes. It’s pretty... What is the word I’m looking for. My hands are just doing a little sparkly pattern and I just hit the microphone. Sorry about that.

Murlin: Doodle-oo, doodle-oo, doodle-oo.

Meghan: Yeah, yep we’ll go with that. [laughs] I don’t know. I don’t know what I’m going for so I’m gonna move past that. Um, so... it’s the ballet that people know if they don’t know ballet, essentially is what I’m saying. Kind of like the Nutcracker, but a vastly different context. Uh... This story also begins with a peasant woman and a tyrannical landlord. Uh, in this one at the start she escapes the prison, she’s not caught first, but she is caught after she escapes, she’s whipped, and she’s left for dead. Uh, passing members of the Chinese Red Army find her, uh, they’re training a group of women, who accepts this peasant woman into their ranks, and together they plan to fight the landlord that she escaped from and free all the peasants and slaves. Um, they infiltrate a party for the landlord’s birthday. Uh, the woman who escaped at the start, she shoots the landlord for

revenge but she doesn't kill him and their whole plan messes up because of it, um... They manage to liberate the prisoners anyway, they redistribute his grain, it's all great – but the landlord and his men come back to attack the Red Army. Um, the two forces fight, the leader of the Red Army side is taken prisoner – prisoner. I can talk. Uh, he's pressed to surrender, he says no, and he ends up burnt to death in a fire, dying a martyr for his cause, 'cause you know. We love cheerful ballets over here. [laughs]

Also, there's like five or six acts in this one. It's long. I'm still not done with it. The Red Army defeats the landlords' forces, storm his hide-out – hideout, kill him and all his lackeys, and then upon discovering the death of their leader, the woman that escaped at the very start who we've followed all this way through the plot, is promoted to lead in his place. Couple of themes there. Peasant women, rising up against this awful, terrible landlord. Um, glorification of the military – the propaganda vibes are strong, right? Um, I mean, a lot of things are propaganda if you look at them from an outside view especially but uh... One thing that's really interesting that came up especially with "Red Detachment of Women" is pointe work in Western ballet tends to be very much about, you want to hide how much hard work it is behind how beautiful and ethereal you can make yourself. You know, you have those, those *bouffées* in Giselle where she's just moving her feet the tiniest bit and she just floats across the stage. And we know that's hard work if we're dancers or if you hang out with dancers enough to hear them complain about it, but most people watching are just gonna be like, "oh that's so pretty!" And you never know. Um, whereas, the approach to pointe work they had especially in "Red Detachment of Women" because they were portraying an army, um. Pointe work as militancy. Uh, they wanted you to see the sharpness and the strength of it and know, oh wow, those women are doing something hard, and intense. Um, and it's interesting too, because ballet without – without any propaganda overlay, without even getting into cultural difference between the many different schools out there, ballet tends to have a lot in common with military training, in terms of... you kinda suppress all your natural movement instincts, you move a certain way, you have your certain posture, your certain goals – you have to do it in step with everybody else. Some teachers are fricking drill sergeants about it. Um, there's – there's a lot in common in terms of how you train the body so... it's really in – I don't know, it's really interesting to me that that was actually something that they not only noticed but exploited when it comes to creating so-called revolutionary ballets. Um... I love – [quietly] oh my god.

So now we're gonna get into another thing. I love the fact that in order to talk about this, we say revolutionary ballet. Because, by this point, there was no actual revolution happening. Mao was in charge. Nobody was revolting against him with putting on these ballets, these so-called "revolutionary" works of art. These revolutionary ideals were not conducting any sort of revolution. But they kept calling it revolutionary, because that made people feel like they were doing something, is my theory. We're getting into theories and guesswork again, but, um. Yeah. When I say revolutionary, I want to make sure we all know the revolution is long over. Um, this is the 60s, getting into the 70s, it's been ten to twenty years since ballet first came at this point. There's no... There's – there's nothing shocking about these ballets when they're onstage. They are... normal. They're the most normal, because they are some of the only ballets that they're actually ok with showing. Um... yeah.

And also, um, getting into what works of art weren't acceptable, and possibly the reason – one of the reasons why the traditional dance form I talked about earlier, *yangge*, wasn't acceptable, um. More traditional Chinese stories placed family at the forefront, so you didn't have your isolated, um, worker-slash-warrior figure to hold up. Um, the idea that they wanted to push forward in this propaganda was the working class is your family, the army is your family. Um, Mao's people are your

family. And if you have your support system in the form of the traditional Chinese family structure, um, your parents and your ancestors and your extended family, that doesn't work so well, right? Um, because then you have – I guess almost a divided loyalty. So traditional stories that emphasise family differently aren't gonna fly. Hence, why most of that traditional work didn't get performed.

I've been talking a lot, do you have any – I don't know. Any thoughts? Any questions –

Murlin: I already – No. Nothing right now.

Meghan: Ok. [while laughing] I try. Um. So... Uh, Jiang Qing, I'm just gonna come back to her again, because we were talking about the model works and she was in charge of that, her ultimate influence on ballet is kind of disputed, um. When her husband was in power, when Mao was in power, she was seen as this, like, almost mother or at least, like, a midwife of the theatrical works, she was praised for having helped shape it, they were like "oh my gosh you've done so much" – and afterwards, her so-called shaping was described as meddling in the affairs of artists. People said that she was sowing distrust between artists that she didn't like, um, sort of manipulating things so that maybe stuff wouldn't get made before she had to say no to it, she could just kind of make sure nobody ever got work if she didn't want them to get work, that sort of thing. She was said to be heavily involved in things like "Red Detachment of Women" before her arrest, but afterwards people were like – I mean, she didn't make it, she wasn't in charge of it, um, people make a point of being like "well that's not hers," you know, "this is separate from her." So, I get the feeling that she held a lot of power in the art world but maybe wasn't exactly [sarcastically] the nicest person to hang out with as an artist. Probably was kind of a jerk to a lot of them. Yet again, of course, I'm being a master of understatement, [while laughing] because... I think jerk, in this context, probably one of the nicer things anybody could say about what she very likely did.

The whole... Whoa. The whole what, now, brain? My brain is like "this is the conclusion time!" [while laughing and clapping] I don't know what I'm saying! Um, so... coming back to, one last time, that idea that China should be using the past to serve the present, and the foreign to serve China – um, 'cause that's Mao's whole thing, right – is ballet, as most Westerners know it especially, and in terms of its history, is rooted in a past that's defined by monarchy and imperialism, you know it went from French monarchy and it's known for being in the courts of Imperialist Russia – it glorifies class stratification, um, it's got these images of the pastoral innocent peasant and the wonderful, mighty, rulers of the area, um, and sort of idealises that system, and it comes from countries China really didn't get along with, and then they co-opt it. And they say, "you know what, instead we're going to glorify our militarism," like I said, using pointe shoes to do that. Um, "we're going to glorify communism by telling stories about how important our working class is, and fighting against capitalism," um – the idea of these uniform masses, there's this image in "Red Detachment of Women," during the fight sequence where they just have this, like, sea of dancers doing *grande jetés* across the stage, just pretty much, like, swarming it, um, in unison, and it's overwhelming to look at from what I've heard, like – You see that and it gives this impression of a huge, unstoppable army. Just from *grande jetés*.

Um, you know in America we have our most famous ballet as the Nutcracker, which has this nostalgic image of childhood, it's all cute and fluffy, it's got imperialist vibes with all our – um, the divertissement bit in the second act, all the different, um, people who perform for your pleasure from other cultures. Um. In China, especially during the Cultural Revolution, the most famous ballet was "The Red Detachment of Women." Because it has the things that they wanted you to think of then. Um. All the militarism and communism and killing landlords who are mean. This is always fun, 'cause it's like... [sarcastically] it's fun talking about this, you know, do I condone the murder of

landlords? Mm, no, murder is bad. Uh... Do I condone any of the stuff that was happening right then? Also no, not – not really. Cultural Revolution was kind of messed up, I say, again, fully aware that that is a blatant understatement. But... also. Landlords, man? Do we need them?

[uncomfortable laughter] Maybe we don't do murder. But like. Could we maybe not have...

landlords? Could they stop? Preventing people from living places?

Murlin: Well, that was the thrust of the People's Revolution, was to remove the feu-feudalism that had ruled China for millennia.

Meghan: That's the thing, you start out with an idea that makes sense. And you say, well, people are hurting. But, if there's a system that's so opposed to change you can only change it through violent revolution, the people who come to power in it, are then themselves violent. And they stay in power through things like violent revolution, through things like propaganda, because that's the only way they know how to maintain power, because that's the people who were given power in this system. So maybe we should all just be willing to change, um, and like try new things, and then decide "ok, maybe this worked, maybe this didn't" but like – if we were chill about things, maybe violent revolutions wouldn't happen as often! Ah! Amazing!

Ok, sorry, political nonsense happening over here – not nonsense. I'm right. Anyway. I have a lot of thoughts about revolution as tradition, um, Mao encouraging the continuation of the revolution not to say "push for change" but to say "we're going to create new traditions that support my regime, rather than any previous regimes," and ballet is all about creating discipline and tradition. You go to class on a schedule, you do barre the same way every time you go to class. Um, it's the same thing every single time, you go in and you know what to expect. So, it's a really useful tool for sort of engraining other new traditions, um, engraining discipline. You obey your teachers, you work with your fellow dancers, you do it this way... and everybody does it together. Um, lends itself really, really well to the ideas they were pushing in the Cultural Revolution. Um, it's – ballet in the 50s through the 60s to 70s in china follows the exact path of their politics pretty much. It goes from their alliance with the Soviets, so it's straight up Vaganova ballet, they did Swan Lake in 1961, and then the Chinese broke away from the Soviet Union and so did their ballet training. And it shifted and changed and by the time they reached the Cultural Revolution, they do exactly what Mao wanted to do with everything which was take it and change it and make it something that served his purposes.

Um, yeah. I don't know. I have – it's – it's interesting how much of the history of this dance form is tied up in propaganda in the People's Republic of China especially, and it kind of makes you look at how ballet is in other places in a new light, because I don't think so many people have consciously done that, but I do think that if you look at ballet from an outside perspective in other cultures the way we're looking at Chinese ballet, um, you can see those – those elements of the same thing. What values it's pushing, what things it wants to say with its stories. Who gets to be the hero of the ballet, and what does that say about who's – who's in charge or who should be in charge, or what we should be fighting against. Fun thoughts. [laughs] Uh, yeah. I don't know any questions Dad? Any random thoughts? Bad puns for me?

Murlin: I was supposed to prepare puns? Oh, no...

Meghan: I mean you're – you're here to be the funny one, I get distracted infodumping, come on!

Murlin: [fake disgusted groan] Well, I [pausing between each word] don't have any of that sort of thing.

Meghan: That's fair. All right.

Murlin: you could hear all the periods between each of those words right?

Meghan: Yes.

Murlin: Mm-kay.

Meghan: They were very, very punctuated.

Murlin: Yes.

Meghan: [laughs] All right. Whoo. We did it! That's another one down. Again, this is gonna be a shorter run-through than last time because last time I was stumbling over my words a lot, but – uh, thank you to my teachers who gave me the tools and skills needed to do this kind of thing. Um, thank you to Dad for being here and sitting through me infodumping and sometimes having some fun stuff to say. Actually, yeah, no, you had that little input about [laughs] the political situation. That was good. Um, and... Do I have any other thank yous? Not off the top of my head. Um, if you enjoy this you can subscribe or download or... I forget what the other things are. Follow, that's one. Just whatever appropriate thing on your podcast listening...

Murlin: Stalk?

Meghan: [while laughing] Yeah, I guess you could internet stalk this podcast?

Murlin: [laughs]

Meghan: Um, 'cause... Yeah, that is helpful. Tell anybody who might be interested in this stuff about it. All that fun stuff. Do I have anything else to say? I don't think so. This is the part where I would have a cool fun joke to sign off with. But I'm not... funny. [long pause] Hm. You really got nothing?

Murlin: I got nothing.

Meghan: Ok. Well, in that case, ummm... Bye! [laughs]

Murlin: Bye-bye.