

BSB



TRANSCRIPT

Ep. 246

Gretchen Menn,
The Byte

(gentle music) - Hi everyone, and welcome back to another episode of the podcast. Now you all know that I get along with pretty much everyone and I just so delight in meeting other people and finding out their stories, getting to know them. I mean, partially this podcast is an excuse to meet other human beings in the world who are putting beauty out there, who are creating good things for other people and who are making this world a more magical place. And this week I was so lucky to have a conversation with Gretchen Menn. And, you know, every once in a while, I just meet someone and it's like, holy cow, I could talk to you for hours. You're the best, I wish we were neighbors. I'd be over all the time borrowing butter or whatever. And Gretchen was exactly this person. She's pretty phenomenal and incredibly talented and funny as you'll hear. And she also has a Wikipedia. So I'm just gonna read a little bit from the Wikipedia because already I know they would do a lot better job of telling who Gretchen is. So Gretchen is an American guitarist and composer who has her own original instrumental work and is also the lead guitarist for Zepparella, an all-female-led Zeppelin tribute band. She was included in Guitar Player Magazine's, 50 Sensational Female Guitarists, and Guitar Player Magazine's, 50 Years of Extraordinary Players. I mean, there's so much about Gretchen and I watched a few of her YouTube videos that show her playing the guitar and I just was like, oh my God, she is so ridiculously good. I just, when you see someone that is that good, that adept at creating beauty, at bringing gorgeousness out into the world, you just have to step back and bow down. And that's basically, basically kind of how I felt during the entire interview with Gretchen. So now let's get into it because I cannot wait for you to meet Gretchen and hopefully laugh along with us.



(Gretchen: (gentle music) It was the middle of the day. It was just like, I was gonna walk downtown with one of my good friends and I ran upstairs to grab my shoes and we were gonna walk downtown. And I hear this like dragging noise. Let me see if I can like, you know. This kind of noise. And I look over and on my desk, the padlock that I kept from my gym locker, I saw it move across the desk just, and then it tossed itself like halfway across the room. (gentle music)

Kirsten: Well, I'd love to ask you the main question of the podcast, which is, I would love to hear a story or stories if you feel like you wanna share more than one of an event where you've either witnessed or experienced it yourself. Something that was beyond words, something magical, miraculous or mysterious, whatever you'd like to share. -

Gretchen: Okay, so as soon as you said that, I was trying to think of like, which one should I share? 'Cause I feel like I have three came to my mind. I don't want to over burden you with, should I pick one or would you like to hear? -

Kirsten: I'm here for all of them a few of the time. It's up to you. -

Gretchen: I have the time and none of them require a huge amount of time. - Okay. - I'll start with the first one that's the most tangible. I can't attribute anything larger to it, but I was about 16 years old. And again, I was a very lucid, like I wanna say grounded, let's just say I was, you know, I still feel that I'm the same person as I was when I was like that age. I just remember feeling, you know, just aware and grounded. It was the middle of the day. It was just like I was gonna walk downtown with one of my good friends and I ran upstairs to grab my shoes and we were gonna walk downtown. And I hear this like dragging noise. Let me see if I can like, you know, (air whooshing) this kind of noise. And I look over and on my desk, the padlock that I kept for my gym locker, I saw it move across the desk just, and then it tossed itself like halfway across the room. It wasn't violent, but I, it was so weird. And it was like, you know, every time you see something like in a movie, when somebody sees something kind of unfathomable and they act like an idiot, that was how I was.

Like I looked around, I was like, was there an earthquake? You know, I'm looking around to see if anything else is shaking, not that an earthquake makes a padlock just throw itself across the room. And then, but, and that wasn't, and I looked to see if my windows were open as though a breeze could have done that. And I even went over and I picked up the padlock again, like an idiot in a movie and was like, huh, huh, huh. And I just kind of looked around, I was like, okay, so that happened. I can't explain it. I'm always the show me the science person. I'm like, well, that was very odd. And then along similar lines, this is a thing that my mom gave me.

It's this old thing where like, when they used to have like coils of stamps and it would come out here, it's where I keep my guitar picks, right? And I've had this for years. And when I was in college, I just had it on my desk 'cause I had my picks and I'm sitting there at my desk and this just goes like that, just pops off. And you can see there's nothing, this isn't airtight. This is like a slit. And it happened more than once. (laughs) And so I'm like, okay, I don't know what's going on, but like, so those are a few things that I've seen that give me enough pause in all of my like scientific rigor to say, I've seen some things that I don't understand why it happened. I don't know what happened. I'm not gonna draw any conclusions, but I can just say that was really weird. I don't know what that was. I can't explain it. So that's my mundane one.



And then my kind of oddly beautiful one is that I was at a party when I was about 22. I was young enough that I hadn't been that many places in life. I'd been to high school and college and that was it. And it was up in Tahoe and there was a girl there and I just knew it like immediately, I just kind of liked her. She just seemed cool. And we were talking and I kept trying to place her. I'm like, I think I know this girl. How do I know this girl?

How do I know this girl? Because there wasn't a clear way we'd know each other. And midway through the conversation, she's like, dude, I'm sorry if I'm tripping out, but like, I swear I know you. And I'm like, okay, right. I feel like I know you too. And then we kept talking and she's like, it's so strange. I feel like we're friends. She's like, I know what your laugh sounds like. It's so weird. And so we stood there for like about an hour kind of tracing out our entire existence. Like where did you spend Christmas as a kid? Did you ever travel this place? Kind of exhausted everything. 'Cause at the age of like 22 or whatever, it's like you haven't been, even if you've done some traveling, there's not that much, there's not that many places you could have met somebody if it wasn't in school or whatever. And I remember her just kind of shrugging and saying, like, maybe it was the past life. And it was the first time I was ever like, God, what an interestingly weird thought. Like whatever it was, this immediate sense of deep kindred like friendship with a stranger that was a mutual feeling was very, I don't know, interesting, cool, like, you know, that was really, really cool. Did it sort of feel like coming home? You know, it was like, you're like, oh, there you are. Yeah, it was like recognizing, it was like, I don't think I've seen you someplace and yet you're so familiar to me that I feel like I must know you. I feel like it must be like, you know, when you talk about, like when people talk about having like amnesia or like a head injury and like they recognize that the person in front of them is somebody they love, but they can't tell if it's their mom or their child or their wife or whatever. It was like that, it was like this person that I'm like, I know, I feel like I know you and I feel like I adore you, but how do we know each other and why are you feeling the same way too? You know, and it wasn't just like we were vibing off each other. It was like, it was something weird. And I remember like, you know, after that I would see her in town and run into her in the store and stuff. And it was, she was great, but it was always so strange to have this feeling of like, why do we know each other? It was very surreal.

And then I guess maybe the last thing that I would be worth sharing only because it's actually proven to be helpful to me. So if it might help anybody else, it's worth sharing, right? So I was going through a really hard time when I was a teenager, like every other teenager, and I was feeling very deeply existential and alone in the world and everything. And it was a time where I was like, I was spending a summer abroad in France, which sounds like really exciting, but, and it was, and I'm glad I did it, but it wasn't easy, you know what I mean?

It's like, I have a really wonderful family.

I really missed them. It was sort of my first time feeling, it wasn't like I was alone, but feeling alone, right? And I remember I'd go for these really, really long walks and having this moment of feeling like just, like that I just didn't want to be miserable, like, but I was having such a hard time not being miserable and thinking about, thinking about myself in the past of times where I was like a kid and had been upset or somebody had been unkind to me or something and thinking about how we have a tendency to look back on ourselves with kind of this like gentle compassion of like a benevolent older sibling, you know, to think back at like the terrible haircut you had in fifth grade or you know, whatever, there's this like this gentleness that we can extend to ourselves in the past that we have a hard time doing for ourselves in the present. And in that moment, I realized that the future me was gonna be extending that kind of benevolence to the me that was suffering. And I remember kind of really like that helped me a lot in one moment. And I remember kind of taking that moment and saying to myself like essentially, okay Gretchen of the future, remember to come back to this moment and give me the strength that you'll have in that time.

And so sometimes if I'm feeling that kind of just like terrible like just desperation and need of some sort of solace, I'll make that promise to myself. And then in the future, when I feel better or when I feel proud of myself for having persevered and some, you know, in a moment that was really difficult, you know, whether it proved to be a good moment of triumph or a challenging moment of, you know, humiliation or whatever, the point is, is that if you can kind of make the promise to yourself to come back to that moment with compassion and kindness, it's really comforting in the moment. And that had this sense, maybe magic's the wrong term, but that sense of larger connectedness, like connectedness with like a part of yourself that's like your essence that you know you can call back, you know, at different times. -

Kirsten: Okay, that's ridiculously gorgeous. I just want to make a couple of points. First, I just love how you reference your first story about the padlock moving on its own, that little canister, the lid flipping off on its own as quote unquote mundane, because if those things would have happened to me, I would have been like, mundane is the last word. I would have been like, hello, everybody, come on. Did everybody see this? Let's form a new religion to worship whatever's happening here. -

Gretchen: The little pick holder. -

Kirsten: So that was so funny and charming. I was like, I just love it. And how powerful to just have that moment where you're feeling so alone, and you give yourself grace, right? So it's almost like you travel into the future to give your present self grace in that moment because we can be so hard on ourselves, so hard on ourselves. And sometimes we can go whole days, weeks, months without being kind to ourselves. But what you're really talking about is this moment, this kind of revelation at that time where you could, oh, I see Ferdinand. Okay, okay. - Did you show how beautiful you are? - Look at how beautiful he is. Okay, everybody, Ferdinand is gorgeous. I'm just putting that in. - He's a handsome, he's a handsome boy. - And I love it when cats just wake up from a nap 'cause they're so, yes, and they're smooshy. They're kind of smooshy and you want to smoosh them. - Yeah. But just, it's like almost, you gave yourself a benediction, one that you needed in the moment, and that changed everything. And it's simple and we can do it every day. So yes, I thank you. It's simple and powerful, so thank you. -

Gretchen: Well, like I said, it's been bizarrely helpful to me. And what I always tell people when I tell them about this little thing that my brain does or whatever, or that this interaction between my current self, past self, and future self is the one thing I always say, but here's the deal, you can't leave yourself hanging. So if you in a moment reach out to your future self, that becomes like a flag in your personal, like I can tell you every time I've done that 'cause I don't just do it every day. I do it in those moments where I'm like inconsolable, I am existentially alone. And the point is, 'cause you gotta keep a record of those 'cause you gotta go back, not just tomorrow, not just in a week, but those become your little moments where you're like, I got you, I got you, I got you. And otherwise you cheapen your own, as you called it beautifully, your own sort of benediction. You want that to be something that you call upon when you really need it and you go back and you give it with total commitment. -

Kirsten: Okay, if you form a cult, can I join? (laughing) (upbeat music)



OUTRO: Okay, everybody, did you fall in love with Gretchen? Just like I did. I mean, there will be a link in the episode show notes to her website, to some of her YouTube videos, and to some other delicious goodies that I think you should check out. I mean, it would really behoove you to take a look at some of those videos because honestly, her talent is just ridiculous. And what I especially appreciated about, you know, her talking about learning guitar, et cetera, et cetera, was she felt like she had to start from somewhere. You know, as a kid, she did, but even later on, there were new things to learn and she was nervous, but she went forward. She faced them. She said, "I'm not gonna say no. I'm gonna walk towards this, even though it challenges me. Even though I might suck at it, even though it's scary, I'm gonna do it." So those are the kinds of people that I think we should watch. Those are the kinds of people we should model ourselves after, and those are the kinds of people that are changing this world into a more gorgeous place. Now, I need to thank Gretchen for taking the time and giving me a few hours of her life so that we could laugh and swoon over her cat Ferdinand because we did do a little of that. And, you know, she was just really present and really funny during the interview. For those of you who like what you hear, please do know that I have a back catalog of so many episodes, and each and every human being tells a story that is profoundly gorgeous, and it just might change the way you view the world. For those of you who like what you hear as well, I'm always looking for ratings and reviews, so if you find it interesting, if you like what you hear, go to the platform of your choice and give me a rating or write a little review. Thank you for listening, and here's my one request. Be like Gretchen. I mean, her entire life, it appears she faces towards what makes her nervous. She faces towards what scares her, and she walks towards it. I know there have been plenty of times where I have second guessed myself and thought to myself, I don't know if I have the chops to do that. I don't know if I have the capacity to do that, and recently I was talking to a friend who said, "You know, I'm looking for a publisher. It's so frustrating, it's so hard to get published." They said, "You're so lucky that you put so much out into the world," and I said, "Look, I'm not gonna wait around for someone else to give me permission. I'm not gonna wait for someone else to give me permission. I'm not gonna wait for someone else to say, "Hey, now it's your turn. I mean, I'm gonna make it my turn 24/7." And yes, it's scary to put my books out, and yes, it's scary to put this podcast out. It is terrifying to put ourselves out in the world, because people, as Gretchen said, if you Google yourself, sometimes people are not nice. And so, yeah, all I can do is encourage each and every one of you that has a dream in your heart, that wishes for something different, or that has some sort of product they wanna put into the world. Go do it. Be like Gretchen, and even though it scares you, and even though you might question your abilities, just know that the world is waiting for you, and it's waiting for the beauty that you're gonna bring. I'll see you in a few days for the next episode, and until then, I hope these days are filled with summer, joy, lots of gorgeous sun, but with using sunscreen, and laughter that lasts as the day is long (upbeat music) [music fades out]

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