

MAEVE:

Hello. My name is Maeve and I live, I guess you'd say, in Brooklyn, New York. I don't know how you chose me out of all the lampposts because a lot of people are like, 'they're all the same', but I'm glad that you did, I think that you made the right choice because I wouldn't say that I'm better than them but I would say I'm different, in a way that's really good. I'm pretty tall. I guess you might have walked into me, hopefully not. People sometimes tie their dogs on a leash to me. I also am a holder of notices, so people who are looking for nannies, babysitters, lost dogs, you'll find those stuck onto me. Regardless of whether or not you're scared of the dark, I'm gonna be shining, but you know what, some people really are scared of the light, think about that.

IAN:

I mean, I think the truth.

MAEVE:

Honestly, I don't know what that means but I did hear a woman say no and she walked by me before.

IAN:

Democracy dies in darkness.

MAEVE:

Yeah. IAN: That's the Washington Post motto. See? The Washington lamppost. I think that's where it must've come from.

IAN:

Well Maeve, let's just start here. What is a typical day like for you?

MAEVE:

I mean, it depends on when I get turned on. Like, these days, it's usually around 7:00PM and then I just like... That's my workday, so it's busy. (LAUGHS)

You know, there's always something going on. I mean, first of all you have people doing whatever it is people do. They run, they walk, they talk, they fight. They push smaller people in little wheeled cages.

IAN:

Strollers, yeah. MAEVE: Hmm-hmm. You know, I think about the perspective you have on us, which is literally looking down on us from above.

MAEVE:

Right, thank you. Yeah.

IAN:

And I wonder, are there things that you see about us, in us, that maybe we don't see in each other?

MAEVE:

Well I mean, the obvious things are, when somebody is balding, I can spot that immediately.

IAN:

Right. Probably before we even know.

MAEVE:

Yes, because I see some people with the confidence of a person with a full head of hair but I know that that confidence is misguided, or it's not long for this world. And you know, I just see a lot of dates happening, which is when two humans are figuring out whether... You know, they will or not.

IAN:

They will or not? MAEVE: Right. Actually, it's not clear to me what they're working on but there's some question between them, which is like, you know, will we or won't we? It seems to be a big issue around lampposts and often, they lean against me to figure it out. Like, they're pressing against each other and they're pushing their mouths on each other.

IAN:

Kissing?

MAEVE:

And they're like, "Will we, won't we? Do you want to? I don't know" and so, that's kind of interesting to me because I'm like, "Make up your minds, get off me."

IAN:

You know, if the answer to that question, will they or won't they, is that they will, you've kind of played a formative role in their lives. You know, the question is will they be together.

MAEVE:

Yeah, I do have some role in that and I do like the thought, I guess, of being an important part of someone's destiny, a person's destiny. But I kind of wish for more, like I do wish for more sometimes. Like, I know that lampposts are featured in film.

I see films. I've seen Speed so many times.

IAN:

Speed?

MAEVE:

You know, because we can watch TV in the buildings and the apartment that's directly across from me, they watch a lot of television.

IAN:

Oh, you are at a level where you can see into apartments.

MAEVE:

Yeah. Like, on my street, we're all basically up to the third floor of the buildings so we can see across to them and I love films, like the golden age of film with Sandra Bullock, Speed. And so, I sometimes see lampposts in films. In Speed, she flew past so many lampposts it was cool.

IAN:

So, you're watching for the lampposts in films?

MAEVE:

Yeah, always. I guess it's like... You know, if you can't see it, you can't be it. So, when I see myself up there on the big screen... And there was another one, it's like an older... It would've been like my ancestors, I guess, featured in *Singing in the Rain*, it's called and...

IAN:

Yeah. That's a kind of famous lamp. He swings around, if I remember.

MAEVE:

Yeah.

IAN:

He grabs the lamppost and swings around.

MAEVE:

Oh yeah. The lamppost is the lead in that movie. So, that's what's cool for all of us, to see that. It's like yeah, there's some people but I don't think they matter. Like, it's just a cast of people - dancers I think they are - and then it's mainly about the lampposts and the rain. Now, I didn't hear it. We can't hear the movie but from what I understand from seeing that movie through the window is these anonymous actor/dancer people, they see this most beautiful, sturdy-looking lamppost and they celebrate it by dancing. Like I said, I don't know but I think what they're saying is like, (SINGING) "Looking at the lamppost and here we go!"

IAN:

Yeah well, I do think...

MAEVE:

(SINGING) "What a beautiful lamppost and look at him!" It's a male lamppost, I think.

IAN:

I don't know.

MAEVE:

Could you find out? IAN: Yeah, we can... Yeah, you could ask your producer or something.

IAN:

You know, I'll just look online right now.

MAEVE:

Yeah, just check what's the name of the lamppost in *Singing In The Rain*, please.

IAN:

OK, one second.

Oh! Well, I did not find his name but I did find an article that he was stolen.

MAEVE:

(GASPS) Kidnapped?

IAN:

Yeah, in 1990...

MAEVE: (GASPS) What's that? Oh. Well, you know that every night you turn on?

MAEVE:

Yeah. IAN: So, imagine that happening 365 times. That's a year. 1990 is 28 years ago, so 28 \* 365...So, that's how long ago. Imagine your light turning on and off 10,220 times. That's when the lamppost was kidnapped.

(GASPS) I'm trying to think back to that day.

(MYSTERIOUS MUSIC PLAYS)

10,000... I'm trying to think back to that day but I think... It felt like a normal day. And so, where is he?

IAN:

There's another article from two weeks later, which is an update, the update being that it's still missing. And then after that, the story...The trail seems to go cold there.

MAEVE:

First of all, I think they're not trying hard enough. They're not taping lost lamppost notices to dogs and sending those dogs around the city.

IAN:

And just looking down the page here, there doesn't seem to be any record if he ever got it back. You know, it's been 28 years. (TELEPHONE DIALING)

MAEVE:

But he would look the same. IAN: Yeah.

(PHONE IS PICKED UP)

IAN:

Hi. Is this Brian Goetzinger?

BRIAN GOETZINGER:

Yes.

IAN:

And you are the Brian Goetzinger who was once in possession of the lamppost from Singing in the Rain?

BRIAN GOETZINGER:

I am. IAN: And have you seen it since? No, I have not. In fact, I have not heard about it in 28 years, that was the last time.

IAN:

So, I'm looking at the LA Times article here. You were working on the film lot, moving old sets. Tell me how you got a hold of this lamppost.

BRIAN GOETZINGER:

Looking around, I noticed that all the lampposts that were from the era of Singing in the Rain were still there and some of them were marked. And then, going through them all, I just happened to find the one that Gene Kelly swung on, or against, I guess you would say.

IAN:

And when you realized what you had found, what did you feel like?

BRIAN GOETZINGER:

Cool. (LAUGHS)

I just said to myself, "Cool". I went to the head of construction, said, "Hey, can I have this one?" and he said, "Why do you want that?" I said, "it's the one Gene Kelly swung on in Singing in the Rain." OK. And that's how I wound up with it.

IAN:

So, you just took it right home from there?

BRIAN GOETZINGER:

Yeah. I stopped by (INAUDIBLE)

and picked up some wire, some fresh chord. I rewired it and it stayed in my front yard and sat there...Oh, probably a year and a half. And then, one morning, it was gone. It just disappeared into the air, as they say.

IAN:

There could be somebody out there, listening to this right now, who is in possession of the lamppost.

What would you want to say to them?

BRIAN GOETZINGER:

Hope they're enjoying it, because I'm not. (LAUGHS)

(INAUDIBLE) them to know that that was it, they would have had to be one of the major of all time biggest Singing in the Rain fans ever born. I mean, there was nothing significantly different about that lamppost from any other one that was on that set. It's just a lamppost.

MAEVE:

I would look for it if... Yeah, I would look for it on every street.

I would look for that lamppost on every street, if I was mobile.

(PIANO MUSIC PLAYS)

IAN:

Maeve, you are in one place, you don't move.

MAEVE:

No. IAN: And I just wonder how it feels to know that there's a giant world out there and that you're in one place. I used to struggle with that a lot, at the beginning. And I was like, "Imagine being a torch!" You know, those are like little... They're called flashlights too. They're like little movable street lamps, almost.

IAN:

Yeah. MAEVE: You know them? Yes. MAEVE: Do you have one? Actually, I will tell you... When I moved in with my girlfriend, you know just sort of... We were getting rid of duplicate things that we had...

MAEVE:

Like, if you had some children you were like, I've already got one?

IAN:

I think had that been the situation, we would've tried to...

MAEVE:

Keep the best one? IAN: Keep them all.

KEEP ALL THE CHILDREN. MAEVE:

Oh, really?

IAN:

In our very small apartment, she had 11 flashlights.

MAEVE:

Cool! She sounds cool! See, that's the kind of person that I used to yearn to belong to, if I was a little torch, because she obviously respects and treasures light and she probably brings one everywhere with her. If she has 11, she's got to be like, bringing them all around in her adventures. So, I'd love to go around - where does she go? To meditation class? Oh, she's going to work in the office and I would get in to see all those places and experience all that stuff with her. You know, whereas just being a lamppost, you're just static. But as I got older, I just grew to accept, "Look, you have this one patch and you just do the best you can with this one patch." And like, you can learn about the world in other ways. For example, through the TV show, Girls. Do you know that show?

IAN:

Yeah. If there was one place other than where you are, in the world, that you could visit, where would you want to go?

MAEVE:

I would want to go to Prospect Park South West, which is just around the corner from where I am now.

IAN:

OK? MAEVE: I would just love to see what happens to people when they just vanish around that corner because, I guess it's like in the olden days, when people would go on boats and just sail off the side of the earth and then you never knew what happened to them when they went. Well, that was a belief for a long time, I'll tell you. But it turns out that the earth is a sphere.

MAEVE:

No, so I think there's a thing, it's called a horizon?

IAN:

Yes.

MAEVE:

And you just travel towards the horizon and then, you drop off.

IAN:

Well, that's an illusion. Well, think about it this way.

If your light were to turn off in the darkness...

MAEVE:

It wouldn't, but OK. It would never.

IAN:

So, all that it illuminates would not be gone, you just you couldn't see it.

MAEVE:

Yeah? Oh, oh!

IAN:

So, there's a lot that we cannot see, that exists, the other side of the earth being one of those things. This question had been resolved and then, recently has started... We're debating it again.

MAEVE:

Yeah. I think it's worth debating. I do. I mean like, you make a kind of convincing case but I would need to see it for myself.

IAN:

From your vantage point, have you ever seen anything that you wish you hadn't seen?

MAEVE:

Well, something that happens to me a lot is that people walk into me and like, I can see it happening before it happens and at the beginning, this was like 5,000 cycles ago.

IAN:

Days? MAEVE: Hmm-hmm. I was like...It's so funny to me. Like, look at this guy, he was looking at his little phone and I could tell he was gonna walk straight into me. And he did and it was like, really funny and we all laughed, like me and the other lampposts. He didn't laugh, he was bleeding. And so, at the beginning yeah, it was great but now, that keeps happening more and more. Like in London, right? This one street in London... A few years ago, they had to actually cover all the lampposts in foam to protect people from banging their heads. They've put padding around the lampposts so that when inevitably somebody runs into someone like you...

MAEVE:

Yeah, they won't hurt themselves because they'll just bang their head into this foam. And I'm like, you know what, what I think would be better? Why not put the foam on the human's heads?

IAN:

It does seem like sort of the wrong solution to the problem.

MAEVE:

Yeah. I think a much better solution would be to put foam over a person's head.

(ORCHESTRAL MUSIC PLAYS)

Because so many people don't seem to see me, you know? And it's almost like, "Guys, I'm right here." (LAUGHS)

It's been a long time thinking I'll be discovered and not even being noticed.

IAN:

What do you mean?

MAEVE:

I don't need to be like, the star of a film but I was talking about like, put me in your episode of Girls.

Put me in the Americans. I'm a steady presence. I can be on or off, depending on the time of day.

What I'm saying is I'm versatile. I think I'm old enough now to handle the fame so I think now is like...I'm ready.

IAN:

You know, it's just audio but we could make a movie right now.

MAEVE:

Yeah?

IAN:

Yeah. We just like, start by... First we'll bring up a little sound. (TRAFFIC NOISE PLAYS)

And then just like...Exterior Brooklyn.

MAEVE:

Yeah. Night-time if you wanted me to be on.

IAN:

Yeah. MAEVE: So, you have to say, "Night-time." Exterior Brooklyn, night-time. MAEVE: Hmm-hmm.

OK. So then, like Maeve... MOVIE NARRATOR: Maeve. Lamppost. MOVIE NARRATOR: Lamppost.

Stands. MOVIE NARRATOR: Stands on the street.

(SOFT MUSIC PLAYING)

MAEVE:

Can you already kind of see what's happening?

IAN:

Well, I think like you know, a romance? Maybe it could be some kind of love story. Maybe a couple wanders nearby.

MOVIE NARRATOR:

A couple, 20-something, lingers nearby.

MAEVE:

Can I do an inner monologue? IAN: Absolutely. OK. We can't shine all the time, and that goes for everybody.

IAN:

And then like, maybe one of them says to the other, Honey, I'm sorry I don't have any money to take you to the movies."

MOVIE NARRATOR:

Maeve sees the couple, so in love, without a dime in their pockets.

MAEVE:

OK and then, what happens with my character?

IAN:

Well, I think it's a movie so you can do whatever you want.

MAEVE:

Yeah.

MOVIE NARRATOR:

Her light flickers a bit with an idea.

She bends at her waist, something she can do now because... Well, this is a movie. She leans all the way down until she's doubled over. She offers her lamp for them to sit on.

MAEVE:

Come on, you two. Let me show you something.

MOVIE NARRATOR:

The couple looks at each other and sits down on Maeve's lamp. She raises herself up to her full height. They look across the street and see Singing in the Rain just starting on the TV.

MAEVE:

I hope you like it!

MOVIE NARRATOR:

The couple holds hands and watches the movie, high above the street. Maeve turns on her light. The couple kicks off their shoes and they land in its glow.

IAN:

And then I guess...I don't know. What do you want to do, like a star wipe?

MAEVE:

Oh yeah. To fade? IAN: Yeah. I think star wipe is too jaunty.

I THINK IT SHOULD JUST BE LIKE... MOVIE NARRATOR:

Fade to black.

(MUSIC AND SOUND EFFECTS FADE)

(XYLOPHONE MUSIC PLAYS)

IAN:

This is Everything is Alive. The show is produced by Jennifer Mills and me, Ian Chillag. We got help this week from Emily Spivak, Laurence Bohr, Eva Wolchover, Bill Curtis and Eric Mennel. We're grateful to the reporting of Shaun Huber and Caroline Armstrong. This episode is dedicated to Jeff Chillag. If you have seen the lamppost from Singing in the Rain, contact us anonymously, no questions asked. Let us know where to find it. We heard music in this episode from Blue Dot Sessions. Everything is Alive is a proud member of Radiotopia from PRX and could not do it without Julie Shapiro, executive producer. Maeve the lamppost was played by Maeve Higgins. Her new book of essays, out any minute now, is called Maeve in America, and she has a climate justice podcast, called Mothers of Invention. You can find any number of ways to get in touch with us at [everythingisalive.com](http://everythingisalive.com) and if there's a thing you want us to talk to, let us know. We'll see you soon.

MAEVE:

Something dies in darkness. What is that?

IAN:

Democracy. MAEVE: OK? And that's like a kind of...Is it an animal?

IAN:

Basically, it's a system of government in which the rulers and other things are decided by the people.

MAEVE:

Oh no! The people? IAN: Yeah. Oh no, what a terrible system. (LAUGHS)

IAN:

No, it doesn't work great. MAEVE: No! Shoot!

(RADIOTOPIA THEME PLAYS)