

SAM: Hello, Ghost Family. Welcome to our fourth of five Season 2 bonus episodes. To start this one off, I would like to share a quick story that I told the audience at the top of our recent Family Ghosts Live Show in Dallas at the Texas Theater.

SAM: Um, something that I spent a lot of time doing when I was 15, is I would stand in front of my parents house in Virginia with uh, a baseball bat and I would simulate entire nine inning baseball games because I had memorized the batting stances and the lineups and the pitching staffs of every single major league baseball team. I was unburdened by things like, um, romantic partners and friends. I had also uh, crafted this very spot on vocal impression of the Orioles radio broadcast announcer of Fred Manfra. And what I would do is I would stand in front of the house and there was this parked car and I would look at my reflection in the mirror, or in the window rather, um, and I would make sure that I had the batting stance just right. And then I would mutter to myself. And I would say, and he stands in, shaping up to be a pivotal afternoon here in Baltimore.

When I was doing this, I remember thinking that I had found this incredible way of making summer evenings last forever. Like I could kind of step out of time for a little while and I could accomplish two dreams at the same time. I could be a baseball player and a radio announcer. Only one of those things worked out later in life. But, um, as I got older, I realized, uh, that two other things were also happening when I was improvising these baseball games. One of them is that, um, neighbors would walk down the street and they would see me hunched over with a baseball bat, staring at my reflection, muttering to myself, and they would cross the street. But the other thing that I realized is that, um, as much as I was doing that because I, I loved doing it, I was also doing it because I didn't want to be inside. Because inside is where my parents were. And around this time in my life, um, my parents were involved in this very silent separation. And I say silent because it didn't involve a lot of yelling and screaming. It didn't involve cursing. Um, and it didn't, from where I was sitting, involve reasons. It was just this extended, endless quiet. And later on, I came to realize that the reason that my parents handled their separation that way is because these very intense things had happened to both of

them individually in their own childhoods. And that the messages that they took away from those incidents when they were kids was just shut your mouth and move on.

And all of that is how I arrived at the watchword for Family Ghosts, the podcast that we're here to celebrate tonight. And that watchword is "every house is haunted". Because I think some version of what I experienced is true in all families. There is some thing or things from the past that live with us in our homes. It lurks in those silences or bizarre behaviors that crop up in our family's lives. These unprocessed emotions, or if you will, ghosts. And at a certain point, many of us realize that we are haunted by these ghosts and we start to wonder what it would take to exorcise them. Um, and I can tell you from personal experience that it takes more than a baseball bat and a good Fred Manfra impression

SAM: On today's bonus episode, stories of those teenage moments when your dynamic with your family suddenly comes into focus and you realize what you're in for the rest of the way. Plus, as usual, a song that sounds like that feeling. That's all coming up right after the break.

SAM: Welcome back to the show. Our first story this week comes from one of my favorite standup comedians, Pat Regan. Pat performed at Family Ghosts Live in New York a couple of weeks ago. And you know what? I'm just going to play what I said about him before I brought him on stage.

SAM: Our next performer is the cohost of one of my very favorite podcasts. It's called Seek Treatment. And uh, okay. Sometimes you listen to comedy podcasts now and it's like a comedian interviewing a particle physicist about DMT and it's, it's interesting, but it's not, it's just kind of like three hours of like, "Whoa". And the thing that I love about Seek Treatment is that, uh, our, our next performer and his cohost, they're just so themselves and they're so real about who they are. Um, and it's, it's so, so funny and I love it so much. I'm really thrilled that he's on the show. Please welcome to the stage, Pat Regan.

PAT: Um okay, marry me. Um, that was the nicest thing anyone's ever said, to me at least. Um, okay, cool. So my name is Pat, as insane as that sounds. Um, one of my biggest goals is kind of to be loose, fun, flirty, what have you, I think in storytelling it's so important to be, say it with me, flirty, while also respecting the craft. Would rather die than disrespect our craft. So basically what you need to know going in is that my family is very kind of competitive. Um, no one really has any sort of, um, performing abilities, myself included. I always say that, um, I always say that it's kind of chic that I can't sing, dance or act, but I so demand to make my living as a performer. Um, and so, but people like to perform and get attention. Everyone likes attention very much. And that, uh, kind of comes to play often. Um, for instance in Christmas time, yes, spoiler alert, we are, say it with me, Roman Catholic. And um, I'm one of six kids and uh, my mom also is one of the six kids, um, which is like ok, inherited trauma. And um, she, all of her siblings had a lot of kids except for her one brother who is bravely a sixty year old gay man. And um, what's cool about my gay uncle is we're the only two gays, gay people in my family, um, so you'd think we'd be friends, but we're rivals. Um, he is like a church queen. He's addicted to Cathol. Um, can't get enough of the stuff. Um, the Pope is like his Brittany

And um, anyways, so everyone has lots of kids so we have lots of cousins, on my mom's side at least. Um, my dad's side can be kind of cool, but, um, we don't talk to them anymore and no one knows why. Um, and, um, scientists are still studying. But um, anyways, so I have lots of cousins on my mom's side and every year for Christmas, uh, just through kind of a general uh, collective desire for the attention of the people around us, uh, we started doing this tradition that's called "the performances". Uh, basically what you need to know is like, basically there, the oldest seven cousins in my family are referred to as the top seven. Um, I'm number three, so kind of safely in the top seven. Um, it's a really clear delineation. There's like 25 of them, but for some reason the top, the top seven, when you're in the top seven, you're like a celebrity, um, at your family- Like people, to quote Mean Girls, just know things about you. Um, and if you're not born into it, you can't get in unless someone dies, there's no social mobility. Um, so anyways, after the top seven, we always like played really fun games with each other that we made up,

like chimney ball, roof ball, et cetera. You get the point. And, um, the group of kids after us is, we call them Next Gen, um, short of course for Next Generation. Okay. Everyone's so out of their chairs screaming. And, um, so Next Gen is like, now they're around college age and they're like, a fun mix of, of boys and girls. And like, then there's a subgroup within Next Gen, which is the boys of Next Gen and they call themselves the Nasty Boys, um, kind of a trapping of youth to do something like that. And then, um, after Next Gen, the youngest girls are all, the youngest kids are all girls. So, uh, they're just referred to as the Little Girls. And, um, so every Christmas, basically what we would start to do is like each kind of faction, the uncles, the aunts, uh, top seven, Next Gen and the little girls would break off into different rooms, um, and start to, uh, plan a performance so that we would then all come into the living room and everyone would do their performances against each other. Um, as kind of a uh, competition thing. Basically there was no judge and no one to say who won. So it just evolved into everyone shouting, um, every year. And top seven- the uncles always went for this kind of real dad humor. Um, the moms always went for sentiment. Like they, um, they do this thing where like they often incorporate an iHome and no one knows if that's against the rules or not, but we let them kind of have it. Um, but their most famous bit was like uh, singing, um all I want for Christmas by you, by Mariah Carey. And kind of when the beat dropped, they all grabbed their favorite child and danced with them on the dance floor. Um, and I got favorite from my family. Um, I use to be my mom's favorite. Um, but now my brother Jack is and I'm like literally in the bottom half. Um, and um, then honestly Next Gen does like some really good work. Um, they, uh, incorporate elements of humor in this really smart way and their most notable performance was when they once, um, kind of paid, they did a mashup where they kind of paid homage to uh, iconic performances throughout the years. Um, so that was really cool. Top Seven is like mashup Queens, like our, we, we take it really seriously and it's really earnest. Like we'll do a lot of, um, our most famous, it was a mashup between uh, Call Me Maybe and Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer. Um, we also tried a thematic mashup of Lorde Royals and We Three Kings. Um, but basically the infighting gets really fucking crazy and, um, it always ends up in a huge fight between me and my older brother Terence. And we've been rivals since we were little. Um, my mom would always do this thing

around Christmas time where she would get us the same, uh, um, she would get us the same present but like slightly different, like different versions of it. Like he would get a blue one, I would get a red one to keep things fair, but sometimes there wasn't just different color options and someone would just get a slightly worse thing. Um, and famously one year on Christmas, all it was, when I was five, he was six. All either of us wanted was the white Power Ranger talking a white tiger sword. And that was all we put on our lists. And finally we got to, we both had sword shaped boxes at the um, bottom of the tree and he opened his and he got the sword and I opened mine and I got a replica of Jafar's golden cobra staff from Aladdin. Was violently disappointed, tried to hypnotize people with it. Um, they hit me with their swords. Um, anyways. Um, so that's kind of our deal. We all like attention. We've had to stop doing the performances cause they got quote unquote too intense and people don't want to do it anymore. Um, but that's like the vibe.

And so essentially one time when I was 11 years young, thank you. I, um, was sitting at my grandma's uh, house and we were all having dinner and then this family of my cousins came over and, um, my cousin Sarah number four, one year younger than me, um, came in, she was wearing glasses. Um, and no one in my family had ever had glasses before. Um, and there was a real part of me that was jealous of that. Um, she came in, everyone kept asking her questions like, "how did you know you need glasses?" Like, "how did you choose those frames?" "Sarah you look gorgeous in your glasses. I love how they fit on your face." And I was kind of green with envy over the attention she was getting. And so what I chose to do was, um, in coming days I kind of pretended I just couldn't see very well. Um, I was like, I can't see things that are too close to me or too far away. Like I didn't put eggs in one basket. Um, I was just vaguely bad at seeing, and I started, and my cousin Sarah had, had shared that she started getting these really bad migraines, uh, before her big break because she was trying, uh she was trying too hard to see that it hurt her head. So I started having these very dramatic migraines where I would like fall to the ground. And my mom did know I was lying, but she had to by law take me to the doctor. And, um, so she took me to the optometrist and, um, it's actually really easy if anyone here wants glasses, he would just like show me stuff and I'd be like, yeah, I can't see this. Um, he would be like, what number is this?

And I'd be like, if I knew, I would tell you. Um, and my mom still knew I was lying, but like she was powerless to stop what was happening. And so the doctor was like, yeah, he needs glasses. Um, which, what an easy job. Um, and, um, so I got to go with just me and mom to the mall, which was super rare and we went to Lens Crafters and I spent, um, honestly two hours trying on different lenses. Um looking for one that kind of fit my face shape, right? And I started building this new persona for myself. Like maybe I would be this person who like, wore these kind of oblong lenses, um, and did a middle part. Um, and maybe that would kind of be what saved me. And, um, so I got the glasses and my mom was furious at me, but she couldn't say anything. And then I wore them to school the next day and kind of like no one really noticed. And I wore them to our family dinner at my grandma's house and it had kind of been done. Um, and so the second week I wore them to school, um, and listen, I lose every single thing in the world and I just lost them. Um, and no one in my family has ever spoken about it ever again. Thank you guys so much. I'm Pat Regean.

SAM: Pat Regan!

SAM: Coming up, Family Ghosts favorite, Micaela Blei joins a mysterious organization that makes her parents suspicious. Our show continues right after the break.

SAM: Welcome back to this week's bonus episode. Next we have a story from one of the artists we hear from our listeners about most frequently Micaela Blei. Micaela's also the story editor for our show and in season one she shared the remarkable story of her grandmother's escaped from Auschwitz in an episode called That You Should Be Happy. And recently at Family Ghosts live in Washington D.C., Micaela told this story, which also sort of has Nazis in it, but in a very different way. Here's McKayla live at Union Stage.

Micaela: Hi. Oh, it's a little dark, but it's these lovely glowey lights, which is really comforting for me. Um, okay. Hi. It's 1991 and I'm going into ninth grade. I will let

you do the math. Think about how good I looked for my age, thank you. Um. Um, so I'm going into ninth grade and I'm nervous. And of course when you go to ninth grade, you're nervous, right? It's going to be a new school, new friends, whatever. Um, but I'm nervous in a really specific way. Um, eighth grade, I'm gonna be honest with you, had been, uh, the worst year of my life so far. My friends had sort of left me and then spent the whole year tormenting me and, um, now it's summer and bar and bat mitzvah season is over, so no one's parents are making them invite me any place and I don't know who my friends are going to be when I get to high school. I don't know what's going to happen. And then something amazing happens. Um, I lived in the country in Northeastern Connecticut and there was a pond by my house and um, I went swimming there and there was this other girl who was also, um, going into ninth grade, um, who I had known but it hadn't been friends with. And we started swimming together and sort of became friends. And her name was Jess and she was so much cooler than me, you guys, she had so much gel in her hair that when her face would move, her hair would sort of like, stay in the same place, you know? And she wore fishnets and Jean shorts over her fishnets. It's 1991. This is very cool. Right? And, and she was a lipstick girl and I was a chapstick girl. So clearly she knew more than me, right? And she was not worried about ninth grade at all. She tells me oh, it's gonna be totally fine. We're going to hang out with um, my older brother. He- she tells me all about him. He's going into 10th grade. He's really cool. He's really bad. His name is Josh. And she finally invites me over to her house and it takes me about 30 seconds to fall deeply in love with Josh. He's very tall. He has an asymmetrical haircut, again, 91. And he, and maybe they're coming back, I don't know. Um, and uh, and he says, oh yeah, don't even worry about ninth grade. You'll hang out with us, you'll come to GFD, it'll be awesome. And Jess is like, oh yeah, GFD like, she knows what GFD is and I say, okay, what's GFD? I at this point had never been invited to join a club that wasn't Hebrew school. Um, or to be totally honest, spelling team, uh, were my two big ones, varsity by the way. Um, thank you. Um, so anyway, I say what's GFD? And he says, Oh, it's German Folk Dancing. It'll be awesome. Please remember he was built to me as uh, bad and cool. But there's another problem with this, which is, um, as you might know, if you listened to Family Ghosts season one, um, I am the grandchild of four Holocaust survivors. We got rules in my family

about Germans stuff. You don't drive German cars, you don't take German in school. My friends in sixth grade, my friend in sixth grade had had a German dishwasher. And when my parents would come and pick me up, they would call that dishwasher the little Nazi on the way home.

I know, in poor taste, but that's our family, right? And so I'm pretty sure I'm not supposed to learn the traditional ja- dances of Germany or Bavaria or whatever. And, um, but these are my new friends. This is my shot. And so to Josh and Jess, I say, okay, and I am the kind of 14 old who has never broken a family rule. But September comes and I go to the first German folk dancing practice and the first thing we learned to do is polka. And I quickly learned that Josh was correct. German folk dancing is awesome because at this point I had seen Dirty Dancing several times and the third person I danced with was Josh and I was like, this is it. I know that, because of Dirty Dancing, how you fall in love is through high stakes dancing. And that's what this is.

So I'm coming back every Thursday like I'm in, I'm, I'm absolutely in. Uh, the problem is of course I am also the kind of 14 year old as you might imagine, who told her parents everything. So I had to tell my parents. I couldn't get up the nerve and finally we're at dinner one night and they knew about eighth grade and the friends and all that stuff. And so my mom is asking me, have you been making friends? Like how's school? And I'm trying to get up my nerve to tell them. So I sort of warm up to it and I say things have been really good actually. Um, I got invited to join a dance club. My mom says, that's so great. You love to dance. Like what is it? Is it ballet? Is it modern dance? What are you doing? And I say, um, it's German folk dancing. And there's silence at the dinner table. And my mom looks at my dad and my dad looks at my mom. This thing passes between them and my dad finally looks at me and just goes, we respect your decision.

And he doesn't explain, but I also don't ask because I got Dirty Dancing to get back to.

So they let me go. I don't understand it, but they let me go and I go every Thursday. And, and the German folk dancing club becomes my weird group of people. Like they are my people. We have private jokes. I knew all of Monty Python, which was like a big advantage with this group. And we, we, we talk on the phone til late at night and it's so fun. And I just, I found my weird, my weird crew. And then towards December, everyone's talking about the lock-in. Are you going to the lock-in in, are you going to the lock-in? And I say, I don't know what's the lock-in? And Jess says, it's where you get locked into a church overnight. You- someone's been to one- you, you play games, you sing songs. It's boys and girls and someone always makes out. And Josh looks at me and goes, it'd be great if you came. And I'm like, hell yeah, I'm going to lock-in. Like sign me up. Just tell me what church to show up at and Jess says, well, all you have to do is join St Stephen's Catholic youth group. We don't even have rules about Catholic stuff in my family. Like why would we have to have rules in my, my family about that. We're Jewish, we're not religious Jewish, but we are like culture- We do all the stuff, you know, we just don't do the like stuff. I, you know, we, we... but I'm pretty sure I'm not supposed to join a church group. But to Josh and Jess, I say absolutely. And now I have to tell my parents, because by the way, I could try to sneak out to spend the night at a church youth group lock-in. But even I at that age understood the irony of that, that like that's not the thing you sneak out to do. So we're at dinner. How's school really great. Still trying to get up the nerve. I say I'm, I'm, I got invited to join a service organization.

And my mom says that's so wonderful. Service is so important. Uh, what is it? Is it Kadima? Is it habitat for humanity? Like what are you doing? I say it's St Stephen's Catholic youth group. Silence. My mom looks at my dad and my dad looks at my mom. That same look passes between them. And my dad finally looks at me and says, don't tell your grandmother, but we respect your decision. And once again, no explanation. They just let me go. And I go, I join St Stephen's Catholic youth group. I go to the lock-in, I'm going to tell you right now, this is not the romantic comedy ending that we all wanted for me, for this. I know I did not make out with- it's okay. My, did I really want to make out with Josh? Yes, that's, yes I did. It's alright. Uh, it was kinda boring. You know, I didn't really understand most of the

songs, but like I ate a bunch of candy and had some fun with my friends and um, I didn't actually stay in St Stephen's Catholic youth group much longer after that, as you can imagine. Um, and in fact a lot of us didn't really stay in the German folk dancing for too long. We all sort of moved over to model United Nations, which was like, more my speed the following year.

And, and that was sort of the end of that. And, um, you know, that, time went on. Um, I, I lived my life. I, I ended up dating mostly almost exclusively Irish Catholic boys and men. My parents never said anything about it. Um, and by the way, if you're Jewish and you're, you date a lot of Irish Catholic men, they all sort of want to be the first one to give you Christmas, which I think is really funny. That's a whole other story. Anyway, I never understood it. My parents never, my parents never really made any comments about it and I never really asked them about all of this in high school. And it wasn't until a couple of years ago because my niece was um, deciding whether she wanted to go to Hebrew school. She was like eight years old and she gets to make her own decisions cause it's 2018 at that point. And that's how it works. And um, and so we were all sort of talking about religious education and I said to my dad, finally, am I remembering this right? Did you let me join St Stephen's Catholic youth group or is that like something I made up in my head? And he was like, yes, yes, I did. Very proud. And I said, so now we're both adults. Like, what was that about? Like, why did you let me join St Stephen's Catholic youth group? And he got really serious and he said, you know, if your kid is crying every day after school in eighth grade and then the next year they're having fun and they've got a bunch of friends they like and you are always quoting that weird stuff on the phone all the time. Um, and they're happy and that's all you really want is for them to be happy. So you're going to respect their decision. Thank you. That's it, thanks!

SAM: Coming up a song featuring one of my favorite lyrics about what it feels like to be a teenager. That's after the break when our bonus episode continues.

SAM: So for Family Ghosts live at the Texas Theater in Dallas, we were joined by a musical duo called D and Chi. They've been friends since they were kids and got

their start busking in Dallas' arts district. I am always fascinated by artists, pre-show rituals. Sometimes you'll see performers pacing around the green room muttering to themselves. Sometimes they're pounding a whisky. Sometimes they're doing both of those things. But D and Shi do this thing I've never seen anyone else do and I love it so much. Once the sound check was over, they just sat next to each other on the stage and told each other stories from their week like they hadn't seen each other for a while and couldn't wait to catch up, even though I think they had played a gig together the night before and I think they had another one that night after our show. And when you consider that they have been playing music together for six years and have been friends for even longer, that really tells you something about their connection and it has to do with why their songs in my opinion feels so authentic and lived in. So to close out this episode, I'm going to play a song they performed for us called I'm So High School. And the lyric I was telling you about before the break, the one that captures so much of the essence of being 15 is "life was like a song. You could turn it off and on." It sounds way better when they sing it, of course. Let's listen to them do that.

I'm So High School

When we both were young

Life was just a song

You could turn it off and on

When you wanted

'Cause I've been thinking

About life, and

How it never

Seems to satisfy

I've been thinking

About you, and

All the things we used to do

When we were fifteen

Talking on the phone

Said we'd never be alone

Oh, that was so long ago, so long ago

I was sixteen

When I learned how to drive

You were by my side

We could'a drove all night

To the radio

And I know

It's all about those good days

When I would call you baby

You would call me maybe

Girl, without you

I feel like I'm not cool

But with you girl, I'm high school

Oh, yeah, I'm so high school

And I'm cool

Yeea-aaaa-aaaah

Wake up

Turn on MTV

And download mp3s

That was my routine

Come home

From school, and call you up

Though we never said too much

Just that we were in love

Or something like that

'Cause I've been dreaming

About life, and

How good music

Seems to catch our eye

I've been dreaming

About you, and

All the songs we listened to

When we were eighteen

We sat by the starlight

Sing songs to the campfire

And we sat by that girl

That we wanted most

We pulled out that six-string

Some of us were dancing

Dancing to our favorite songs

All night long

And I know

It's all about those good days

When I would call you baby

You would call me maybe

Girl, without you

I feel like I'm not cool

But with you girl, I'm high school

Oh yeah, I'm so high school

And I'm cool

Yeea-aaaa-aaaah

And I know

I know

I know that

We can't go back again

But, every time I do, it

Never ends

Like we were fifteen

I said that I loved you

You said: 'Oh yeah, that's cool, '

But we didn't know

What we would become

Too young and too in love

What a happy ending

Guess we weren't pretending

And we know

It's all about those good days

When I would call you baby

You would call me maybe

Girl, without you

I feel like I'm not cool

But with you girl I'm high school

Oh yeah, I'm so high school

And I'm cool

Yeea-aaaa-aaaah

SAM: Family ghosts is hosted and produced by me. Sam Dingman. If you enjoyed Pat Reagan's performance, I could not possibly recommend his podcast more highly. It's called Seek Treatment. He co-hosts it with the also amazing comedian Catherine Cohen, and it routinely reduces me to tears as I drive around Brooklyn in my little silver Corolla.

You can hear Micaela's magic touch in every single episode of Family Ghosts and you can also find more of her work at michaelablei.com

D and Chi is Darren Eubank and Chima Ijeh and you can find their music on Spotify. Darren also has a podcast where he tells stories from their travels. It's called On The Road with Darren Eubank. This episode was mixed by Kevin Gamble with Spoke Media's head of post production Will Short. Family Ghosts is a proud, creative partner of Spoke Media. Find more great podcasts spokemedia.io. A friendly reminder that our supporters on Patreon, who we call our Kindred Spirits, get even more bonus episodes as well as access to a private show feed where all our episodes are add free. They get discounts on live show tickets, early access to season three and much, much more. Join them at patreon.com/familyghosts and thank you so much for your support of our storytelling. We'll be back next week with our last bonus episode of the summer. Until then, thank you for listening to Family Ghosts, where every house is haunted.

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