

00:00:00	Music	Transition	“Switchblade Comb” by Mobius VanChocStraw. A jaunty, jazzy tune reminiscent of the opening theme of a movie. Music continues at a lower volume as April introduces herself and her guest, and then it fades out.
00:00:08	April Wolfe	Host	Welcome to <i>Switchblade Sisters</i> , where women get together to slice and dice our favorite action and genre films. I’m April Wolfe. Every week, I invite a new female filmmaker on. A writer, director, actor, or producer, and we talk—in depth—about one of their fave genre films. Perhaps one that’s influenced their own work in some small way. And today, I’m very excited to have writer-producer Christy Hall here. Hi!
00:00:27	Christy Hall	Guest	Hello, hello.
00:00:29	April	Host	Uh, for those of you who are not familiar with Christy’s work, please let me give you an introduction.
			Christy grew up in a very small town in the Oklahoma Panhandle. The small town life propelled her to move to the big city, where she earned a degree in playwriting and went on to see many of her plays staged. In 2011, her original stage play, <i>Yours, Isabel</i> premiered at the 2011 Edinburgh—is it festival fringe? Fringe festival?
00:00:52	Christy	Guest	People switch them around all the time, so both are fully acceptable.
00:00:55	April	Host	<i>[Laughing]</i> I never know. It’s the Fringe. We know what it is.
00:00:58	Christy	Guest	We know what it is, exactly.
00:00:59	April	Host	No one’s gonna be like, “Oh, what is that?” Anyway.

[Christy laughs.]

But after some success with live theater, she turned her eye to writing for the screen. Her debut screenplay, *Daddy-o*, was optioned to be produced by Martin Scorsese and LBI, and landed her on *Variety’s* list of ten screenwriters to watch, and in the top three of the *Blacklist* of 2017.

But many who like to binge on Netflix series will know Christy as the executive producer, co-creator, writer of the adaptation of Charles Forsman’s graphic novel, *I’m Not Okay With This*. Directed by John Entwistle, who people might remember from the other Netflix show, *End of the Fucking World*. Uh, the show stars Sophia Lillis, as a teenager in a dumb, small town, who develops surprising telekinetic powers.

On the screen side, Christy is currently working on an English language adaptation of Joachim Trier’s film, *Thelma*, for FilmNation, and she also adapted Katie Khan’s *Hold Back the Stars*, set up at Lionsgate with Justin Baldoni to direct.

Her newest stageplay, *To Quiet the Quiet*, is the 2018—no, 2019

Woodward-Newman Drama Award Winner. Woodward-Newman. God, what a lovely couple.

00:02:03 Christy Guest

Isn't that wonderful?

[April responds emphatically.]

I was most excited to get that award, just 'cause it—just to be part of like, any measure of that legacy is kind of wonderful.

00:02:09 April Host

That name. God, do they give you Newmano's? Nevermind.

[Christy laughs.]

Christy will next be adapting Stephen King's *The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon* for Vertigo in Village Roadshow.

So, Christy, the movie that you chose to talk about today is *Willow*. Can you give us a little explanation on why this is one of your fave genre films?

00:02:28 Christy Guest

Listen, I love genre and I love, um—I just love that sphere. So there were a lot of titles that I could have chosen, but I feel like as a creative, as an artist, as a writer, I wanted to pick something from my childhood. Because i feel like those are the most formative years as a creative, where you really, um, I think you kind of become very charmed and dazzled by the art form of storytelling. And so I just kind of wanted to honor one of the ones that I grew up with, that ultimately has landed me here.

00:03:05 April Host

For those of you who haven't seen *Willow*, today's episode will give you some spoilers, but that shouldn't stop you from listening before you watch. As always, my motto is that it's not what happens but how it happens that makes a movie worth watching. Still, if you would like to pause and watch *Willow* first, this is your shot.

And now let's introduce *Willow*.

00:03:21 Music Music

"Elora Danan" off the album *Willow* by James Horner

00:03:22 April Host

Written by Bob Dolman and directed by Ron Howard for release in 1988, *Willow* stars Warwick Davis as Willow, a Nelwyn living a mostly idyllic life with his wife, Kiaya, and two children. One day, an imprisoned woman gives birth to a baby in a faraway castle of Daikinis. Those are the kind of like, larger humans. The woman begs a nursemaid to smuggle the child away just in time before the evil queen Bavmorda arrives to kill them both.

00:03:46 Clip Clip

Mother: Please, help me!

The Wench: I can't.

Mother: They're going to kill her!

00:03:50 April Host

The nursemaid puts the baby on a raft of grass and sends her down the river, but the nursemaid does not survive an attack of Nockmaar hounds. That's where Willow comes in. His children find the baby in

the river, and he reluctantly brings it back to the house.

00:04:04	Clip	Clip	Willow: Absolutely, under no condition whatsoever is anyone in this family to fall in love with that baby.
00:04:10	April	Host	Willow leaves for a village festival, where a sorcerer's apprentice will be picked. Willow wishes to be a sorcerer, but he does fail the test, unfortunately.
00:04:18	Clip	Clip	High Aldwin: No apprentice this year! <i>[Crowd reacting negatively.]</i>
00:04:21	April	Host	Suddenly, Nockmaar—a Nockmaar hound destroys the village looking for the baby. Willow presents the baby to the village
00:04:28	Clip	Clip	High Aldwin: This child is special! This child must be taken beyond the boundaries of our village, all the way across the Great River to the Daikini crossroads. Speaker 1: But who'd do that? Burglekutt: It seems only fair that the man to take the baby to the crossroads be the very man who plucked it out of the river. I nominate Willow Ufgood. <i>[Crowd cheers.]</i>
00:04:57	April	Host	So they go to the crossroads, and at the crossroads the only human they come across is a criminal in a cage, Madmartigan, played by Val Kilmer. After failing to get some passing soldiers to take the child, Willow agrees to release Madmartigan and give him the baby.
00:05:12	Clip	Clip	Willow: You gotta promise to feed her. Madmartigan: Come to daddy, little darling. Willow: And keep her clean. Madmartigan: Absolutely.
00:05:19	April	Host	On the way home, Willow is captured by Brownies, who also took the baby from Madmartigan, and he's told by the Fairy Queen that the baby's name is Elora Danan, and that he needs to find the sorceress, Fin Raziel.
00:05:32	Clip	Clip	Cherlindrea: Take my wand to the sorceress Fin Raziel. She will guide you and Elora Danan to the kingdom of Tir Asleen, where a good king and queen will look after her.
00:05:41	April	Host	Willow and Elora set off, where they find Madmartigan hiding from an angry husband. Soon, Bavmorda's warrior daughter, Sorsha, and her army finds them, but they're able to escape by inciting a brawl. Madmartigan takes them to Raziel, and she's been turned into a little possum. It's really cute.
00:05:58	Clip	Clip	Willow: This can't be right.

			Fin Raziel: One of Bavmorda's spells transformed me.
00:06:04	April	Host	The group is soon captured and taken to a snowy camp. They hatch a plan for escape, but Madmartigan is dosed with some love powder, and professes his love to a very confused <u>but</u> interested Sorsha.
00:06:17	Clip	Clip	Madmartigan: I love you! Sorsha: Stop saying that! Madmartigan: Can I stop the beating of my heart? It pounds like never before. Sorsha: Out of fear? Madmartigan: Out of love.
00:06:27	April	Host	They escape on a sled. Eventually they meet the warrior Airk and his crew, and they take Sorsha hostage. She escapes and runs back to her army to warn them. Then, the group makes it to Tir Asleen, a castle that is supposed to have an army, but it's barren and filled with trolls and troll shit, unfortunately.
00:06:45	Christy	Guest	That's right, steps in it.
00:06:46	April	Host	So they've got nothing, except for, you know, like a cache of weapons. So Madmartigan prepares for battle with booby traps and plans. A huge complex fight with a two-headed troll corpse dragon and a mote ensues, and it's a lot to explain. There is some slapstick stuff. There's people, you know, killing each other, all that stuff. But in the maylay, Willow loses the baby. All hope is lost. Fortunately, Sorsha realizes that she has feelings for Madmartigan, and switches sides in the middle of the battle.
00:07:18	Clip	Clip	Queen Bavmorda: Where's Sorsha? <i>[Baby crying.]</i> General Kael: She has turned against us, your Highness.
00:07:23	April	Host	The group and Airk's army trek to Nockmaar Castle, where Bavmorda turns them all into pigs.
00:07:29	Clip	Clip	Queen Bavmorda: You're not warriors... you're pigs!
00:07:34	April	Host	But Willow's finally able to turn Raziel back to her human form and she gets ready for battle. Raziel and Bavmorda— <i>[Laughs]</i> have a big wizard fight, and Willow does his best to help. But in the end he ends up fooling Bavmorda because he does his old disappearing pig trick, and Bavmorda falls for it and then she dies, restoring peace and prosperity to all Daikini.
00:07:58	Clip	Clip	Fin Raziel: Willow! Where's the baby? Willow: It was just my old disappearing pig trick.

00:08:06 April Host Willow is rewarded with a magic book and returns home a hero and a sorcerer in the making.

00:08:11 Christy Guest That was so impressive! That's the whole movie.
[April sighs, exasperated.]
Wow! And you did it in just like, minutes!

00:08:15 April Host I really—you know, I try to make these concise, but mother fucker.
[Christy affirms delightedly.]
This is a—there's a lot going on that I didn't realize until I watched it again, like, this is a lot.

00:08:24 Christy Guest It's an adventure movie, so there's a lot of twists and turns. But you captured it beautifully. That's exactly what happens.

00:08:29 April Host Well, I think—so that's something that I would love to kind of get into first, was the fact that like, yes, there is a lot of stuff here.

00:08:36 Christy Guest It's true. I mean, watching it again, i was kind of amazed. I didn't remember that the plot took so many twists and turns. But because it is an action movie, and it just—they are on a journey, you know, much like *The Lord of the Rings*, and the landscape is always changing, um, I had the same thought of, "Wow, there are more setpieces and more legs of the journey than I even really remembered as a kid."

00:09:02 April Host Yeah, and the funny part is, though, that—is Bob Dolman said, "After our first story meeting, George said, 'Let's think about 45 scenes.' And I said, 'Why 45?' And he said, 'Well, it's three acts, so 15 scenes per act.' I said, 'The second act is longer though.' And he said, 'I can only afford 45 scenes.'" So—*[Laughs.]*

00:09:21 Christy Guest Oh, that's interesting.

00:09:23 April Host "Let's say that the middle of the movie is longer, then the 15 scenes can be longer." That, I thought, was hilarious.

00:09:30 Christy Guest That's interesting. I've never heard that before. I mean, I—typically you kind of more are measure by page count. I've never heard anyone do it by scene.
[April affirms.]
But um, that's a great quote. *[Laughs.]*

00:09:42 April Host I have so much to say about the writing of this, and we can kind of dig into like, what that process is, how it worked for them, how that might not work for you or how it might, you know? But I think that that's something that is interesting is like, I haven't heard of that yet before, but the way that Bob Dolman talks about it is that he came from WKRP and SCTV, so he was writing sketches. He had not done a feature yet, and so this was his first feature job. We can get into that later, too. But he always approached everything from character, because that's what you do in a sitcom. And you know, a

lot of people do in their writings, you approach from character. Whereas he was up against um, a guy who very famously thought about things in terms of plot, and other people kind of um, developed the characters for him.

And so, one of the processes they said is that um, he said, "I start with character and he starts with plot. So he takes a yellow legal pad and says, 'Okay, what scenes you want?' I said, 'This is so random.' He said, 'We're making the movie. Let's make the movie something we want to watch.' We had to talk about the audience then, and we said if we pick one person we want to see it, it's going to be a 12 year old boy who wants to see it, and if we can satisfy him, we're successful.

"Then we dove in, and I said, 'I'd like to see a scene in the snow with them going down a sled.' And he said, 'That sounds like something that would be in act three.' I also wanted a river scene. These are all things I liked in adventure movies. They weren't in the right order, and I had to go back and see if totally random ideas would fit into the movie, but a lot of them did. We'd say, 'I want a dragon in a castle,' all of us jumping in like 12 year old boys, and I went home with that yellow piece of paper thinking, 'How am I going to write this movie?'"

I mean, have you ever—like, when you're approaching genre, have you ever thought like, here's a piece of genre, a scene that I love from a movie that I adored or something like that, how can I emulate that in what I'm doing? Because this is the kind of audience that I want, or the kind of feeling that I want to evoke.

00:11:36 Christy

Guest

That's a wonderful question. I do think it's really important to really understand—yes who is your audience, right? So like, when people say, "We're making this movie for everyone!" Well, if you try to make a movie for everyone, then you're actually making a movie for no one. Like, you really do need to distill for yourself like, who is this for what is the demographic, what is the tone?

But then instead of—I don't really go like—I don't like to write to scenes. I really—I like to start with character. Which is what I really like about *Willow*, to tell you the truth. I mean all the fun set pieces aside and the adventure and the plot and all the scenes that you and I were just discussing. Like, what I most love about this—and it's very much the way that I write—is start with your characters. 'Cause if you know what they want, if you know their actual need and want and drive, and you know their character arc, I find that all those other things come into place.

So for example like—and just to kind of run through them—like, *Willow* for example, we sat down on a man who doubts himself. He wants to be a sorcerer but he doubts himself, so we watch him through this adventure gain confidence and all the way to, yes, becoming more confident and becoming, you know, a rising

emerging sorcerer. But I love that is actual you know most successful magic trick in the climax of the entire movie is actually honoring the fact that he's just a farmer that does pig tricks. So it's actually, I think, showing yes, you do have the potential to be this incredible sorcerer, but also don't be ashamed of just who you are, and it all needs to work together, right?

00:13:21 Christy Guest And then like, Madmartigan for example, it's like you start with someone who's in a cage. Clearly he did something wrong and is left to die in a cage, right? And even he—he runs into this fellow war buddy Airk, who's like, “You're a thief,” and like you're—it's like he's kind of been reduced to this laughable person that doesn't have loyalty and is just a thief, and kind of reduced to nothing.

And we watch him actually start to form his alliances and loyalties again. We watch him even—I love when he puts on the armor there in the castle, because it's like we we go—we watch him, you know, go from wearing basically a torn dress that he has to like tie at his ankles in order to make pants back into being kind of fully realized as a knight again. All the way to the point of his redemption story is Airk being like—his war buddy saying, “Go win this war for me.” So he's been reinstated to being a soldier, that even is war buddy who dismissed him now is like, “No, you are worthy to go win this war. Go do it.”

And it's like if you look at every single one of them even though the Queen's daughter you know her understanding I actually she wants to fight for good and like what I do like about this movie is that if you really distill it down to the characters needs and drives and their full arc actually find their arc to be wildly satisfying because they all really change, because of their journey.

00:14:42 April Host That was not the case in the earlier drafts of this.

00:14:45 Christy Guest Oh, I do not know about this.

00:14:47 April Host It became a kind of problem to be solved for Bob Dolman. In all, I think he only wrote seven drafts over the course of a year, so it was actually fairly, um—you know, he comes from a TV writing background, so I think it was actually—

00:15:01 Christy Guest It was a quick process, yeah.

00:15:03 April Host In a sense. But he said, “I remember one time I got a little panicky and thought the story wasn't working. I said I think Madmartigan is a better character than Willow. What if he was the hero? George said, ‘What are you talking about? Willow is the hero.’ I said, ‘I'm just having more fun writing Madmartigan.’ And he said, “Stick with the plan.’

“My struggle of writing was, oh, what if this started with madmartigan getting caught and put in the crow cage?’ And I began to write that, and even though it didn't end up in it, all the stuff goes into the writing of something, and it just deepened my understanding of Madmartigan, and it paid off. In that, I discovered he had a soft side of him, and that was a feminine side. I like that about him because Willow was obviously a caring person, but to inject a little bit of having Madmartigan fall in love with the baby became very important to the rest of the story.”

00:15:48 Christy Guest

I love that.

00:15:49 April Host

So there were certain things he was doing where hew as overwriting, because at one point in time he, um, had a 220 page script, and he tape da pair of scissors onto the copy and gave it to um, George Lucas and to Ron Howard. And they sat down and he was like, “I realize this is long. But it's a 200—like we need to do this.”

00:16:09 Christy Guest

I love learning about this, I know nothing about any of this. That is great. 220 pages?

00:16:16 April Host

Yeah. I mean, that's a—I think—you know, we'll get into this the kind of freedom that Bob Dolman had in what he was doing and how rare that might be—but I think that that's—I know from me, as a writer, I tend to not overwrite, and I'm wondering what your process is. Do you—do you do that kind of story building like, in a separate document ever? Do you—like, what's it what's your process with that?

00:16:42 Christy Guest

Wonderful question. I do. I tend to overwrite unapologetically, because I think sometimes you have to just kind of vomit it up and then go back, and then you have a clear sense of what—what can stay and what can go. But I think no matter what medium I'm working in, whether it's theater or television or film, like, I do like to just get it out and then—and then you go in. 'Cause writing is rewriting, and so it's trusting the process that you actually have the full freedom in it.

In fact, in the beginning—and everyone has their process—but for me in the beginning, I would rather just get it all out on the page, like all the thoughts, so that everything is on the table. And then I can really pick and choose what I want to keep and what is worthy of keeping and what are the—you know, you have to sort of murder your darlings.

And in terms of process, like, it's a little different depending on what medium I'm working in. Typically my plays, I just jump right in. I just start writing, like I just left the character start to talk to each other. A lot of times the characters talking to each other, actually they revealed to me what happened. But theater's very different, 'cause

sometimes it really is one location on a stage and it's only two or three people literally talking to each other.

Sometimes you'll know—like, I'll know the inciting event, I'll know where they are, I'll know who they are, a lot of times I know how it ends. Sometimes in theater I'll write the final scene and then I'll start at the beginning and be like, okay 'cause I know that's what I want the climax to be. So then I go back to the beginning and I'm like, "How did they get there?" and I let it be revealed to me through the characters.

00:18:18 Christy

Guest

But theater, there's a long gestation period and theater, and you can also rely on the fact that it's going to be workshopped a lot. You're going to work with a lot of actors, you're actually going to see it in different cities with different actors with different directors, so you kind of have the freedom to just really ease your way into it.

And in that way, when you're being paid to write a feature—and here's what's so funny about it is I actually typically despise outlines. That's just not—I don't like to write about writing. I don't like to describe the scenes and the characters. I want to just put it on the page.

So I will say to be a full-blown professional, I had to. I was forced to become much more just eloquent with my outlines, and just understanding that that is absolutely part of the process. You can't get away with it, because if people are paying you X amount of money, you're a WG writer, studios are involved, maybe big pieces of talent are involved, you're working with—maybe already there's a huge director on board. The outline is part of your—the process. Like, it's understood that you're going to do an outline or a treatment.

00:19:31 Christy

Guest

And what's—it's actually good for you. That's what I learned. I was like, "Ugh, they're just pulling my teeth." It's like pulling teeth and I'm just screaming and there's blood everywhere and it's horrible! And I'm just like, "Just let me write the script."

Well, actually it's really good. It's actually so helpful, because it to be asked to write an outline before you write one word on the first page in final draft, what it is—it kind of ends up being a little bit of a contract with your partners. So it's you being like, "This is what I think the movie is and it's—" And I do write long outlines. A lot of times like 30 to 40 pages of like, this.

I'll get super detailed, 'cause I would rather know now if I'm off, if the ending isn't working, if there's a character that you want to get rid of, if there's a certain dynamic you don't like. I'm just going to vomit it

all up. I'm going to give it to you. This is what this is what I think this is.

And what's good about it is by the time—and you can have to go through process, you have to run the gauntlet. But once that outline is approved you are so assured going into being sent to script basically, because you now are assured that all of your partners agree this is the movie that you need to go, right? So it's interesting. the thing that was my arch-nemesis, which literally was outlines, has now become my friend.

00:20:49 Music Transition “Switchblade Comb” by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:20:50 April Host Yeah. Well, I mean, Bob Dolman had a similar problem too.
[Laughs.]

We're gonna take a quick break. When we come back, we'll continue a little bit more with some *Willow* talk. We'll be right back.

00:21:04 April Promo Look, there's a lot of sacrifices that you have to make throughout the day. Blood sacrifices, basically blood sacrifices. But with Betabrand, you never have to sacrifice comfort or function for style. Betabrand's dress pant yoga pants are super comfy, perfectly stretchy, and stay wrinkle-free. Choose from dozen of colors, patterns, cust, and styles, including premium denim, with the same flexibility and comfort as yoga pants. Rlght now our listeners can get 20% off their first order when you go to [Betabrand.com/switchblade](https://betabrand.com/switchblade).

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00:21:46 Music Transition “Switchblade Comb” by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:21:51 Promo Promo *[Airplane intercom chimes.]*

Speaker 1: This is your captain with an update from the flight deck! We'll be reaching Max Fun Drive on... March 16th. That's right on time. As a reminder, Max Fun Drive runs for just two weeks and it's the best time of year to support the podcasts you love. If you look towards the front, you'll see your favorite hosts with special bonus content and lovely thank-you gifts for new and upgrading monthly members. Now, sit back. Relax. And catch up on your favorite Max Fun shows now! So you can listen to the new episodes releasing March 16th. And thanks again for choosing Maximum Fun!

[Airplane intercom chimes.]

00:22:36 Music Transition “Switchblade Comb” by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:22:43 April Host Welcome back to *Switchblade Sisters*. I'm April Wolfe, and today I'm joined by Christy Hall, and we're talking about *Willow*.

Uh, so, before the break, you know, we were talking a little bit about

having some kind of freedom in going into these projects that you're getting paid for, right? Bob Dolman, you know, he says many times throughout all of my notes that he had a very particular kind of freedom that you don't necessarily see a lot today.

And he said, "I believe that I wrote seven or eight drafts of the script in about a year or a little more. First I got in an outline form for myself. I never gave it to them. I thought I'd write a rough draft from that, but it didn't take too long because I wanted to get feedback from them. I remember thinking this isn't the greatest draft, and I hadn't written a feature before, but these guys will have lots of feedback, so it'll be fine.

"The situation was much different than it is today, and makes it unique to George Lucas, too. I was completely trusted, so I didn't feel like if I screwed up the script I would lose my job. I felt like I was here to make this movie with them. The creative process goes draft-by-draft. There will be lots of discussions, you'll be paid for every draft you write, you have a job, you're hired. I can imagine in a studio situation where they'd fire you and say, 'Okay, we need another writer.'"

And for his first feature, coming in from that, he has so much to say about how wonderful it was working with both Ron Howard and George Lucas, in that respect of just feeling like he had a safety net pretty constantly. And that for every draft it felt like there was no, um, you know, second guessing, necessarily, that they made the right choice in hiring him.

00:24:20 Christy

Guest

I'm so glad he had that, because freedom and support is truly everything. Um, and I mean I would say I—when you're first starting out, um, especially in the feature-space.

Like, I myself, um, you know, my first couple of jobs, because I'd never done it before in the system and I had just never, um, I had never—I literally just became a WG member just a couple of years ago, and it's like—it is scary at first. I'm just—and I love that he had that process. That he had partners that really gave him room to breathe and to—although he had proven himself in another medium, so I think that he'd, in a lot of ways he'd earned his stripes, and he'd really earned that freedom.

Because I came from the theatre space, I do feel like I had a little bit more to prove that I could turn in, you know, a screenplay draft. You know, 120 pages, that would be, you know, something that people would be excited about. But yes, I really know what he's saying in that.

My first couple of jobs I did—I did have anxiety about like, you do have that fear. Like, I don't have imposter syndrome in that, "I'm a fraud, I don't belong here." It's like I've been writing for way too long, like, I have clawed to be here, I've—this is, you know, it's taken me almost fifteen years to realize this dream, right? So, it's like, I don't feel like an imposter, per se. But I did know that I had—that I did have something to prove.

00:25:57 Christy Guest I did have to prove that I could show up, get drafts in on time, be a team player, um, hear notes. You know, a lot of writers have a hard time with notes, because their ego gets in the way, and I would just encourage. You know, when you're getting—when you're getting notes, it's like, um, I think there is—there is an art form to—a lot of writers can't rewrite themselves.

And I would just say that if you are a writer that has trouble rewriting yourself, like, really lean into the process. Trust your partners. It's okay to push back on notes that you truly don't believe in, but being—being a good team player, and understanding that a mind-trust to get something out of the gate. And the fact that he really felt that from the beginning is incredible. And I have to say, I feel like I had to fight for that freedom, and prove that I—that I could, and do it successfully, um, and it feels really satisfying.

I think that I'm just starting to experience what he had the first go-around now. Um, through hard work, proving that you can count on me to do it, I do feel like I'm—my partners now, even if I'm in new partnerships, you know, if you've built enough of a reputation people—you don't feel the same measure of pressure you do in the beginning.

00:27:19 Christy Guest But I would say if you feel that pressure, if you feel that anxiety, if it feels scary, like, yeah, it is scary. You're doing a big, beautiful thing, and isn't it wonderful? So roll up your sleeves and do the fucking work. And guess what? Do the work, do it well, get it in on time, show that you can and you will, and those freedoms will come later, they will.

But earn those freedoms. Earn the right to take a breath. Earn the right to be able to be given a little extra time or even—I have partners now that are like—I had a situation recently where someone was like—I was like, "Do you need an outline from me?" And they were like, "What do you feel?" And I was like, "I feel like I could just jump in." And they were like, "Well jump in. I trust you, 'cause you have a track record."

But I would just say you have to earn those moments. So like, if in the beginning you're not given that kind of freedom, don't take it personally. It has nothing to do with you, it's just that this is also a business. And that's what's hard about this industry, is that it—it's taken art and creativity and turned it into a business that actually is very commercially viable and makes millions of dollars. So like, have humility in that, that a lot of people have a lot on the line and you need to be a team player.

00:28:27 April Host Yeah, and you know, like if you think about this, the fact that George Lucas was taking so much risk with a movie that had a big budget. Like, this was not a small budget movie.

00:28:38 Christy Guest How much was the budget? Do we know?

00:28:38 April Host It was \$35 million.

00:28:41 Christy Guest In 1988 though.

00:28:42	April	Host	It's a—that's a lot of money in 1988.
00:28:44	Christy	Guest	That's a lot of money, yes.
00:28:45	April	Host	Um, no one wanted to finance this movie. No one. Everyone turned it down. The only people who, uh, like—he was kind of self-financing some of it, but the—really, most people turned the financing down. They just didn't think it was gonna be a good thing. Um, George Lucas said, "They said this was not a good investment. The fantasy genre has been spectacularly unsuccessful, including <i>Krull</i> , <i>Legend</i> , <i>Dragonslayer</i> , and <i>Labyrinth</i> . Only <i>Dark Crystal</i> was relatively successful. MGM finally agreed then that they would put up the money. And it was just because it was the same people who had, um, greenlit <i>Star Wars</i> ."
00:29:19	Christy	Guest	It's so funny, because I'm also a big fan of <i>Labyrinth</i> , and <i>Dark Crystal</i> . And I think to your point that maybe sometimes things that don't do well at the box office, you know, doesn't mean that they didn't become, you know, utterly treasured. I mean—
00:29:36	April	Host	Box office—yeah, box office I think is really silly, and in fact sometimes I look at Rotten Tomatoes to find the movies that are, like, somewhere around 50 percent "rotten," you know? <i>[Christy affirms.]</i> And then I'm just like, that might be—that might be the thing—
00:29:47	Christy	Guest	The thing, yeah.
00:29:48	April	Host	—that like in ten, twenty years, like, that might be the thing. Especially for, um, things geared towards children. Um—
00:29:55	Christy	Guest	For sure, and actually it was interesting watching <i>Willow</i> again this morning, if just, like—just to be reminded of—there's a lot of humor in it, and like, silly humor, like playful. I mean, I guess that's the reason I liked it, as a kid, because—but as—watching it through adult eyes, it was fun to be reminded that yes, there's the fantasy elements, yes there's the action and fight scenes, um, and there's a lot of heart in it, there's a lot of like sweet sincerity in it. But then, also, to be reminded of like these really big comical moments, um, and I understand that probably from adults it maybe didn't make sense? <i>[April affirms.]</i> In terms of maybe to them it felt like it wasn't one cohesive movie perhaps, but, just, I don't know, like seeing it as a kid, I mean, God, I literally thought it was the greatest thing I'd ever seen.
00:30:48	Music	Transition	"Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.
00:30:49	April	Host	I, uh, we're gonna take a quick break, when we come back we'll get into some more <i>Willow</i> stuff.
00:31:00	Promo	Promo	Music: Upbeat, cheerful music plays in the background.

Allie Goertz: Hi, I'm Allie Goertz!

Julia Prescott: And I'm Julia Prescott. And we host—

Both: —[Round Springfield!](#)

Julia: *Round Springfield* is a new *Simpsons* podcast that is *Simpsons-adjacent*—

Allie: Mm-hm.

Julia: —um, in its topic. We talk to *Simpsons* writers, directors, voiceover actors, you name it, about non-*Simpsons* things that they've done. Because, surprise! They're all extremely talented.

Allie: Absolutely. For example, David X. Cohen worked on *The Simpsons*, but then created a little show called *Futurama*!

Julia: Mm-hm!

Allie: That's our very first episode.

Julia: Yeah!

Allie: So tune in for stuff like that with Yeardley Smith, with Tim Long, with different writers and voice actors. It's gonna be so much fun, and we are every other week on [MaximumFun.org](#) or wherever you get your podcasts!

[Music fades out.]

00:31:41	Music	Transition	"Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.
00:31:48	April	Host	Welcome back to <i>Switchblade Sisters</i> . I'm April Wolfe, and I'm joined today by Christy Hall, we're talking about <i>Willow</i> . Um, so, you know, you had been talking a little bit about the, um, the kind of soft warrior, you know, those hands and the kind of connection. And I wanted to bring up a little inspiration that Bob Dolman had for writing, in particular, a scene that is lovely and is very small, and it's the one where Madmartigan is holding the baby and is feeding her, uh, blackroot.
00:32:16	Christy	Guest	Blackroot. Yes, that's a great scene.
00:32:19	April	Host	And so, Bob Dolman said, "George said 'you gotta watch these movies first.' He got me a screening room because he didn't want me to watch it on VHS. We'd be down at Warner Brothers and he'd say, 'Okay, you gotta watch <i>Seven Samurai</i> , and all these samurai movies,' and it really worked. There's a scene in <i>Seven Samurai</i> , and that became a very important movie to me when I was writing <i>Willow</i> . There's the scene in the middle of the battle, a mother carrying a baby, and she gets shot with an arrow. And the guy comes in and grabs the baby, and the guy is crazed and crying, and he says, 'This happened to me.'"

And then the scene turns into, “My mother fed me blackroot.” It's silly, yeah, but through that scene we find out Madmartigan had a mother and was capable of these softer feelings. And so he took the essence of this warrior grabbing this child and having this moment and being like, “This happened to me. My mother—” you know, like and distilled it into something that's just a really sweet, almost throwaway moment that reveals quite a bit of backstory and history, with a, you know, a very concise nature.

I'm curious, you know, in terms of what you get from inspiration from other movies, TV, plays. You know, if you have heard anything where specifically you can kind of pinpoint that you kind of distilled a feeling or a scene from something else, and kind of stole what they were doing there?

00:33:40 Christy Guest

I mean, I think, look, we're all inspired by every story that's ever—every story you've ever heard, it influences you in some way, right? So as a creative, look, we even subconsciously sometimes—I mean I've even written things that people are like, “Oh, it's kind of like that scene or whatever.” And I'm like, I literally didn't even think about that, but now that you bring it up you're right.

So it's interesting that even subconsciously we are kind of manifesting things that we love. And then I do like it in moments as a creator word where you are doing it knowingly. You one hundred percent, and you're doing it, 'cause then you can do it with better craft and better thought.

And so, for example, like in *I'm Not Okay With This*—now on Netflix—you know, our female protagonist—it's, you know, she kind of lives in a similar space to Roald Dahl's *Matilda* to Stephen King's *Carrie*. The fact that 21 Laps from *Stranger Things* were also our producers, like we knew that people would draw similarities between Sydney and Eleven, for example.

So it's like, I think wisdom just dictated that instead of shying away from it and being afraid of it, to just press into it and be like, okay, this is a treasured landscape. This is, you know, there are female protagonist out there that have already kind of played in the sandbox. So if we're going to get in the sandbox then, again, wisdom would dictate that like, okay what have other people done before? Like, what do we like about Matilda? How is she any different?

00:35:17 Christy Guest

Like let's talk about Eleven. Let's let's talk about—let's just go to all these places, so then we can be incredibly thoughtful about like, how we want to make sure that our character is uniquely different in that landscape. But then also how can we also give little links to an audience who has also come from these stories?

So for example, those who have watched the show and those who haven't—and I won't spoil anything—but in our show, we very much give a nod to Carrie. And a lot of people ask like, you know, when she's covered in blood and she's wearing the dress like, “Did you—like, that totally is reminiscent of *Carrie*. Like, was that on purpose?” And it's like, “Yes!”

[Both laugh.]

Yes, it is! I love Stephen King, and like—and again, it's like, now Sydney, the character we've created, is very different than everyone. She's not Matilda. She's not Eleven. She's not Carrie. She is Sydney and, you know, she's very very uniquely different. The tone of our show is different. The trajectory of our show is different. There's a normalcy and a blue collarness to her life that we love. Like we made her wholly unique and different, where she can stand among those cast of characters, they can all coexist and all be celebrated and wholly unique all the same time.

But like, yes like she's in a dress covered in blood and it's 100% a wink and a nod to Stephen King's *Carrie*. And isn't it delicious and fun? And especially in 2020, you know, a lot of the audiences that are watching my show maybe haven't been exposed to *Carrie*. And you know, maybe there are some Stephen King fans out—you know, 15 year old Stephen King fans out there. But I'm excited by maybe people who are watching it and get surprised and delighted by that imagery and actually didn't know where it came from. And there's like, "Oh no, that's Stephen King's *Carrie*." It's like, "Well, what is—" And then it's, "Go read it. Go fall in love with Stephen King."

Like, we're all like—we're all manifesting and we're all kind of co-creating. I mean, if art—it's like, does art imitate life or does life imitate art? I think it's all the things all of the time. We're all part of it. If you're a storyteller like, you can't not be part of that.

00:37:27 April

Host

I want to talk a little bit about kind of moving out of your comfort zone with some things. Because for *Willow*, Bob Dolman really was not prepared for the action sequences and writing those, and that was very different. I mean, and of course were you talking about like moving from playwriting to screenwriting, running multiple scenes, lots of the action, that kind of thing. For him the same thing where it's just like WKRP in Cincinnati is—takes place in a radio station. Like he's got people talking, it was really hard.

So when he took the job, George Lucas promised him, "You do the details. That's what you can do. But leave the dragons to me." And he was just like phew. And then finally they got to that giant Tir Asleen scene. That is endless. There's no way that I could explain all the things that happened in that scene. But it was so difficult for him to write that he was just like, on the verge of giving up, because it was just—I mean, it would be hard for any action writer in general, but he was a person who didn't even work in that genre, right?

So, he said, "I have a lot of difficulty with the Tir Asleen battle. There were too many things going on. We wanted all those things going on, but without losing track of character. So much goes on in that scene, and that's why I said to George, 'You said to leave the

dragons to you. I don't even know where anything is.' George had this idea that all these things should be piled into the scene. I had dialogue but I didn't know where to put it. It was frustrating.

"He said, 'Okay, I'm going to put you in a room at ILM and just work with the storyboard guys,' and that was great. I'd say, 'Willow's on a bridge, and then a dragon is going to come out of a moat that's for some reason inside the castle.' And they'd do all this drawing, and I'd run back to the hotel at night and write the dialogue following the pictures. And then I show it to them and we go back and forth writing and drawing. That was the most difficult just because of the logistics of it. There's no character development in that scene, just action."

That, to me, was just like, "Wow, you really dug yourself out of a hole." 'Cause there is no character development truly except for Sorsha—

00:39:26 Christy Guest —falls in love, decides she—yeah, she sees him on the dragon, fighting, and then she decides, he's fighting for—like, you see that moment, then she grabs him and kisses him. You're right, that's the most that it is probably, in terms of character.

00:39:38 April Host The rest is slapstick, or um, fantasy—

[Christy affirms.]

—and those two coming together. And so I think it was really hard for him, because he was just like, "Look, the only thing I wanna do is advance character, advance the plot." But, you know, George Lucas was just like, "You need a big set piece like this." And sometimes, you have to set those things aside, and so—but he still wanted to have some dialogue in there that made some kind of semblance of sense, and that worked for the characters.

00:40:07 Christy Guest What I really love about this conversation is that like, look, as an artist even if you play in similar sandboxes and you're drawn to certain archives whatever, like it is 100%, it is so vastly important to remain an avid student of your craft, and to dare to attempt things you've never done before.

So like, for example, you know, when I when I wrote *Get Home Safe*—that was in the top five of *The Blacklist* in 2018, I believe—like, I, you know, the town and kind of know me from *Daddio*, which is basically two—it's a cab ride. It's people in a cab and it's a whole conversation, which you can see how, as a playwright, that was actually su—'cause people are like, "How do you just have them talking the whole time?" I'm like, "That's what I do. Like, that's theater, right?" So it's like, actually they're like amazed, and I'm like, "No, that's actually the easiest thing I can do."

Then with *Get Home Safe*, it was like, “Okay, this is a genre movie, like we’re talking *Thriller*, *Pulsing*, you know, like playing in the more genres space in terms of a scary movie. So it’s interesting because I had people close to me be like, “Have you ever written a genre movie before?” And I was like, “No.” And they were like, “How do you know that you can do it?”

And I was like—I mean literally I just was like, I—the only assurance I have is that I know who the characters are, I feel like I have a sense of the point of the movie, of a sense of like, you know, the set of circumstances. And yeah, the rest of it terrifies me, in terms of big set pieces and chase scenes and the whatever the hell. Like, had I ever done that before? No, but I didn’t want to be afraid to dare to try, because I do think as an artist we should never lose our courage.

00:42:07 Christy

Guest

Like, you know, even in the theater space, like I write musicals as well, I’m a book writer, like librettist for musicals. Look, there was a time I’d never written a musical before. There was time I never written a play before. There was time I’ve never written a screenplay before. I had to learn final draft. There was a time—like, you know, this adaptation, *Hold Back the Stars* that’s now set up at Lionsgate. Like, that was—it’s an elevated sci-fi adaptation of a book. It’s kind of like *Gattaca* meets *Gravity*, sort of.

Like, had I ever done that before? No, but it’s kind of like—I guess I would just say like, yes, like have fun playing in the spaces that you love to play in, the characters you like. Like, sure you’re gonna be drawn to certain things. What I love about this is—what I’m so proud of him actually, is like—then if *Willow* is this incredible reflection of an artist that really jumped in the deep end and relied on the things he knew he was good at, and then also just was thrown in the deep end and learned to swim. It’s like, hell yeah. That is what an artist is. That’s what it looks like.

So it’s like, actually if you find yourself kind of gravitating to the places that you feel super super safe, then you’re not challenging yourself, and you might plateau as an artist. And deep down, no artist wants to feel like they’re not growing. And because, you know, so much of becoming an artist is your own curiosity, and your own—your own need to just wonder, I think.

And so it’s like don’t, you know, don’t uh—believe in yourself. You know, dare to try. And listen, and if you fail, or if you [*Stammering*] if you land—it’s like the rotten tomatoes. If you get 50% there, trust that you’ll have people around you that will help you get the rest of the way, you know? But like, also don’t be afraid to not be perfect all the time. I think art is wild and perfectly imperfect, so just fucking start throwing paint on the canvas and have fun.

00:43:59	Music	Transition	“Switchblade Comb” by Mobius VanChocStraw.
00:44:00	April	Host	That’s a great place to wrap up. So, uh, Christy, again, people can see <i>I’m Not Okay With This</i> on Netflix. And um, there are many episodes there for you to binge on, correct?
00:44:11	Christy	Guest	Correct! And I have some, yeah, features, a lot of really fun announcements coming out. You’ll start seeing stuff fully realized in the future space, um, very soon.
00:44:20	April	Host	Okay, thank you so much for joining us today!
00:44:22	Christy	Guest	Thank you for having me.
00:44:23	April	Host	Thank you for listening to <i>Switchblade Sisters</i> ! If you like what you’re hearing, please leave us a five-star review on Apple Podcasts. If you do, we’ll read it on air.

If you want to let us know what you think of the show, you can tweet at us @SwitchbladePod or email us at SwitchbladeSisters@maximumfun.org.

Please check out our Facebook group. That’s [Facebook.com/groups/switchbladesisters](https://www.facebook.com/groups/switchbladesisters).

Our producer is Casey O’Brien. Our senior producer is Laura Swisher, and this is a production of MaximumFun.org.

[Music fades.]

00:44:52	Clip	Clip	Willow: It was just my old disappearing pig trick!
00:44:55	Speaker 1	Promo	MaximumFun.org .
00:44:57	Speaker 2	Promo	Comedy and culture.
00:44:58	Speaker 3	Promo	Artist owned—
00:45:00	Speaker 4	Promo	—Audience supported.