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John Moe: We've all been assigned homework. Let our show help you with some of your homework.

It's *Depresh Mode*. I'm John Moe. I'm glad you're here.

Transition: Spirited acoustic guitar.

John Moe: This homework doesn't have a due date, although if you can finish it before you die, that's kind of a plus. Your assignment? Figure out what the hell happened back there. When you were a kid, when you were growing up, when you were being formed by the people and events around you. Your task is to take a good, hard look at those people and events and what went down, and then connect all that stuff to the person you ended up becoming: your present habits and choices, the people and things and uses of time and places you invited into your life. How did A become B? Please show your work.

The research may sometimes require exploring some really difficult stuff that you'd maybe prefer to just stuff down as long as you can, but try to face it anyway. Maybe make some phone calls, write some emails, get some answers. It might also just require you to sit and do some thinking. Now, the assignment won't be graded, but you may find it tremendously rewarding. It might make you feel like your footing is more solid as you walk through the rest of your time on earth. And like I said, we're here to help by introducing you to other students and sharing their stories about how their research is going.

We hope these stories inspire you and encourage you as you do your work. And it's not school, of course, that I'm talking about. It's life.

Neko Case is a singer songwriter originally from the Pacific Northwest. She's released seven critically acclaimed solo albums and is also part of the band The New Pornographers—Grammy nominations, packed concert halls. Her singing voice is among the more beautiful and powerful things that you can imagine. She's been at work on a new Broadway musical adaptation of *Thelma and Louise*. And Neko Case has just released a new book, *The Harder I Fight, The More I Love You: A Memoir*.

Transition: Spirited acoustic guitar.

John Moe: Neko Case, welcome to *Depresh Mode*.

Neko Case: Thank you. I'm very excited to be here.

John Moe: I know that you always put a lot of thought into album covers, so I assume you put a lot of thought into this book cover. And it's very striking. Can you tell me what we see when we look at this cover?

Neko Case: Well, it's a picture of me when I'm a little girl. And I'm holding my cat, Rufus. And I'm wearing a swimsuit that I wore for probably like six months without taking it off. It's disgusting. And I'm in the front yard of our house, on the Colville Reservation in Washington State, and there's a big monster behind me with its hand on my shoulder.

John Moe: Okay. (*Chuckles.*) And what does the monster represent?

Neko Case: You know, when you feel like there's something inside you that's protecting you, kind of a thing that people tell you aren't supposed to have. A beast kind of a creature, a monster.

John Moe: Okay, so the monster has its arm around you in a pal-sy way. In a—it's going to protect you with those—

Neko Case: Not that I'm going to sweep you up and eat you kind of way.

John Moe: Right, right. Those big, sharp teeth are purely for defense. Well, so we go back in time, and we meet Neko Case as a kid. Tell me who we're meeting. Tell me about this kid in this picture.

Neko Case: That kid was really into animals, and nature, and being outside, and music. And I was alone a lot. But you know, I just—I was really kind of starving for company.

John Moe: Where were your mom and dad?

Neko Case: They were working at an archeological dig site on the Columbia river, about 45 minutes away.

John Moe: Okay. So, you were home alone a lot during the day.

Neko Case: Yeah, it was beeeees. (*Chuckles.*)

John Moe: Now, you and I are both from the Puget Sound area. And I think a lot of people think of Puget Sound as beautiful, and people are wealthy, and it's just this—you know—God's country kind of place. Not really your experience. Tell me about the part of the country you grew up in.

Neko Case: Well, I grew up all over Washington state and parts of Oregon.

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And I was always like the underbelly poor type with, you know, cars in the yard and no money. And not super popular at school, because you were a little too poor. Washington didn't used to have lots of wealthy people when we were kids, I don't think. I felt like it was just pretty working class and poor. Mostly. That's what it felt like, anyway.

John Moe: Yeah, kind of pre-Microsoft, or at least before the real boom of that kind of thing. Yeah. Did you grow up thinking that you had it rough? Because it sounds kind of rough what you're describing. Did it feel that way to you?

Neko Case: Well, I definitely wish we had more heat in our house. Like, I was cold a lot. And you know, I had a sense of design and what I wanted my room to look like and how I wanted to decorate it. And you know, I was a little kid. I was excited to decorate my space. And we just didn't have things to do that with.

And it was just—there was no real resources. Yeah, strange things like you have a shit ton of cake mix in the—I don't know why, but it's dry cake mix, and there it is.

John Moe: So, did you make a cake?

Neko Case: Nah, I would just eat it raw out of the box.

John Moe: Okay. (*Chuckles.*) At some point in your youth you were told that your mom had died. Can you tell me how that happened? Tell me about those circumstances in which you were told that.

Neko Case: Well, I was at my Grandma Case's house for the weekend, and my dad came to pick me up on Sunday—you know, like he usually did if I stayed the weekend at my grandma's. And he looked really weird. And we got in his car, and he was like, “Okay, well, I have—you—I don't—you know, your mommy died.”

And I was just like, “What?” And he was crying. And I was like, okay, she must really have died, because Dad doesn't cry about things.

John Moe: Were they together at this point or not?

Neko Case: No. But it was still, you know, really sad. So, he was crying, and then I was crying. And it was just this really weird, surreal—like just wearing a super damp, moving blanket all the time or something. You know, kind of like depression feels. ‘Cause it is depression, and it just lasted a really, really, really long time.

John Moe: How old were you when he told you this?

Neko Case: I was in second grade. I don't know how old I was, but I'm sure if I—I know I had to do the math for the book, but I don't remember off the top of my head.

John Moe: So, he told you that she had died, and then what happened? Was there a service, or—?

Neko Case: Yeah, there was a wake at my grandma's house, and I went. And you know, obviously I had to go. She was my mom, and there were people on the lawn. And you know,

there was weird, green Jello dip and things that you get at the supermarket for things like wakes. You know, French onion dip. Celery to dip in it.

John Moe: And people coming up and consoling you?

Neko Case: No, not really. Only my Aunt Sue. Aunt Sue was the one person who consoled me. When she consoled me, I started to cry a little. She was very dear to me. And I just—I loved her.

John Moe: Was that your mom's sister, Sue?

Neko Case: No, it was my mom's brother's wife. She was a Finn, and she had really awesome freckles on her nose, and a great laugh, and she was just really—just a really sweet person.

John Moe: And then, how long after that was it before you got, I guess— Well, tell me what happened in regard to your mom—your knowledge that your mom had died.

Neko Case: Well, I spent about a year and a half being really, really depressed. And then one day my dad picked me up at school in third grade, about a year and a half later.

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And it was weird that he was picking me up from school. But I was glad, you know. I was like, “Oh, good. I'll just ride home with dad today.” You know, he hadn't really been talking or anything. He was really silent.

But then he picked me up, I got in the car, and he was like, “Okay. Um. I don't want you to think she's a ghost, but your mom is back. She's not dead.”

And my first thought was, “Are you fucking kidding me?! Do you really fucking think I'm stupid enough to think that someone is a ghost?!” Like, (*chuckling*) I was so offended. I was just like, “What do you think I am? Like, do you not even know me?” Which he didn't. But.

So, I just immediately was thrilled. Like, “Well, where is she? Can we go see her right now?” And we did, and I was just so glad to have her back. I was like, okay, all that other stuff, it's gone. It's gone. This is the new now. So, it was very weird.

John Moe: What had happened?

Neko Case: She faked having cancer and moved to Hawaii.

John Moe: And did your dad believe she was dead? Did your—

Neko Case: Yeah, my dad did. Like, my dad and I both thought she was dead.

John Moe: What was your relationship with her after that?

Neko Case: Just desperate to be around her all the time, and not really ever getting to be. She and my stepdad would move around a lot, because he was an archaeologist. And so, they would go to different archaeological sites for work. Like, she didn't really come and visit or anything either. I just would go there for the summer.

John Moe: On site to a dig somewhere?

Neko Case: Yeah, which I very much liked. But. You know, they would be at work all day. And so, I didn't really get to see her.

John Moe: With all fondness here, how much did that fuck you up? This idea that your mom had died. And then like, what did that do to your relationship with the concept of death, with the concept of finality? Like, what—did that cause long-term damage for you?

Neko Case: Well, when my first really close friend died when I was about 24, I had a really hard time. And I think I had a bit of, you know, mental illness—like, disassociation—that came out in really strange ways. Like, I thought somebody was following me and was going to hurt me. And there wasn't anyone following me.

And you know, when I woke up from that, I was like, “Of course, there was no one following you.” You know? It was just this weird disassociation, kind of a hallucination thing that lasted a couple of weeks.

John Moe: Did you have a hard time believing that your friend had actually died?

Neko Case: Well, he died in such a strange way, it was a little weird at first. He was in the cab of his truck with his uncle and his son, and they were in Spokane; they'd gone on a fishing trip. And a tree in a windstorm just fell on the cab of the truck and killed them very, very suddenly. And you know, hopefully without any horrible pain or anything. There was a motorcyclist behind him that said it was so eerily silent, immediately. I hope that translates to no pain, no struggle.

So, I really battled with that for a while. And then one night, I had a dream where he came and talked to me in the dream, and he said, “I'm doing better. I'm doing good. I'm looking out for you. I'm okay.” And then I felt a huge weight lifted. And you know, some people believe in that sort of thing. Some don't. I feel like something really happened. I don't know. I can't say exactly what it was, but it was a very helpful visitation of some sort, or hallucination. I don't know. But it was good.

Transition: Spirited acoustic guitar.

John Moe: Coming up, what happens to someone who grew up with events like that and in an environment with that kind of neglect?

[00:15:00]

Transition: Gentle acoustic guitar.

John Moe: We're back talking with Neko Case, author of the memoir, *The Harder I Fight, The More I Love You*.

Did you ever feel taken care of by your parents? Were there times where—?

Neko Case: Oh! Never.

John Moe: Never.

Neko Case: No. My grandparents, yes. My parents, no.

John Moe: What does that do to a person, to grow up like that?

Neko Case: (*Beat.*) There's just so much development that doesn't happen. There's so much self-esteem that doesn't grow where it's supposed to. There's so much rage based on sadness, and there's so much just feeling really inadequate and really useless. Or maybe you're even, not just useless, but a problem.

John Moe: You're one of the more confident people that I've met, and I've been lucky enough to work with you on a couple of things and spend time with you, and you always seemed so confident to me. How does somebody who was not nurtured become as confident as you are? Or do you even agree with me that you are confident?

Neko Case: I have confidence in some areas, for sure. I think at a certain point of just thinking I'm nothing, and then society telling me I'm nothing, because I'm a girl—you know, who wants to be a girl? Especially then. Like, it's a bit different now, but—you know, the tide is turning backward. So, I worry for young girls and theys and thems and LGBTQ people and neurodivergent people. You know, if you're not a heterosexual male, there's like, “What good are you?” You're kind of—you're something else.

But you know, I think I—at a certain point, I realized like if I'm so unimportant, then I'm almost invisible. And if I'm invisible, it means I can do whatever I want. And I found confidence there. And then, you know, I tested it out a little by little by little, and I found that it was true. And you know, of course there's White privilege involved in that and like, you know, things of that nature that definitely helped me along the way. But I don't—like, there are times still where I just feel absolutely unlovable. You know, they come out when I'm really tired or really overworked or just, you know, sad. But.

John Moe: Do you feel like you don't deserve love?

Neko Case: Yeah, sometimes! Because, you know, there's a lot of rage in me too. And I use it for good most of the time. But sometimes you just—I could just be yelling about something and be so upset, you know?

John Moe: Yeah, because—and you can trace that back to when there was nobody to help you out when you felt that way?

Neko Case: I remember being a kid, and my dad wouldn't speak. And I could stand there yelling, “Please, listen to me!” And he would just ignore me. And that rage is the rage that's related to the rage that happens now. They're so intrinsically linked. So, but then it's also related to the beast creature that kept me alive.

So, it's kind of like you got to hold your beast-friend's hand and be like, “It'll be okay.”

John Moe: Where did the beast creature come from? Did you generate that beast creature?

Neko Case: Yeah. I mean there was something looking after me that I guess was me.

John Moe: I was gonna say that sounds like you've got a gear that kicks in.

Neko Case: Yeah, it's berserker.

John Moe: Yeah, is it still with you today? It's still—still happening?

Neko Case: Yeah, yeah, it doesn't go away. Like you know, it's like one of the nerves that exists in the middle of my spinal cord that is always there at the ready.

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John Moe: In the book, you say, “There are stretches of time that add up to literal years that I don't remember just because I was so sad. I mourn those years.” What years are those?

Neko Case: I think a lot of my touring career—late '90s through, you know, maybe like 2015 or so—a lot of things I don't remember. And you know, I wasn't using substances. I hardly drank at all. I just was overusing myself and never in the moment. I was always—you know, I always had my eye on the next thing, because I was like a dog who didn't know where my next dinner was coming from. I was like, “I gotta make sure that there's a cable from here to there, so that I don't fall into an abyss or something.”

You know, so. I just wasn't perfect.

John Moe: Were you trying to just work as much as you can, as hard as you can, to make up for something? To cover up for something?

Neko Case: I was trying to get to wherever I was supposed to go—or you know, wherever you arrive, I guess, is what I was thinking. And I don't know, I just—I didn't feel at home with myself very often.

John Moe: Where were you supposed to go?

Neko Case: I just thought I would know when I got there. Like, “Oh, you live in a house now! It's nice. There's heat; there's food in the fridge.” You know, it's just supposed to make you happy, being able to survive. But you need more than that as a human being. You can't just—like, the bare minimum is really important for sure, but you need companionship and understanding and all kinds of other things that, you know, I just wasn't developed enough at that point to understand.

John Moe: Did something happen in 2015 that changed that?

Neko Case: Well, I met my partner that year, and that definitely turned things around. But I think I was just ready to meet him too. Like, not to take away any credit that he should get, 'cause he's wonderful. But—can you hear my dog's feet just tick-tacking across the floor? Sorry about that.

(They chuckle.)

John Moe: That's okay. It's the sign of a good home.

Neko Case: But I think I just was so tired of being so beat up, you know. And I think I just decided to let myself feel something good.

John Moe: How did you manage to do that?

Neko Case: I don't know! I think I just tried the being present in the moment. Like, when you fall in love with someone, that's all you want to do is be in the moment. So, it's a nice lesson in being present. And you know, we have a daughter, so—and I met her when she was six years old.

And you know, with kids that age, like—that's what you have is in the moment. You can see the long-game picture, of course. And you care about what's going to happen, and you try to do the right things to make sure that they feel good about themselves. But the moments are so funny. And so great, you can't help but be in them. Like, six-year-old kids are hilarious! And engaging. And you know, they say the darndest things, John. I don't know if you've heard that before, but.

John Moe: They do. They do. *(Chuckles.)*

Neko Case: Yeah.

John Moe: Yeah, I've got a few former six-year-olds of my own around the house who continue to say those things.

Taking care of somebody, how has that shaped your idea of parenting and shaped your idea of your parents and your memory of your parents?

Neko Case: Well, my parents had me when they were children. And my partner had his daughter when he was 30. Like, he was ready to be a parent. So, I think it's a very different picture that I wouldn't blame my parents for, you know. They were kind of victims of their circumstance at the time. And that I have a lot of compassion for and forgiveness.

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I just—I guess I didn't really forgive my parents for not taking responsibility for that, and my mother specifically for never stopping the—the seeing what she could get out of it and then going, “Eh, I don't want that.” She kept coming back and then going, “Eh, no.” And it was brutal.

Whereas Jeff is a very good father. And you know, that's one of the reasons I'm sure I fell in love with him is he was such a—he was such a feminist dad! And he was so proud of his daughter. And he just couldn't not talk about her. And I was like, “Oh! Good for you.”

I just really admired that.

And it's not like he was making an effort to do it. It was just coming out of him.

John Moe: Is your mom still alive today?

Neko Case: I have no idea.

Transition: Spirited acoustic guitar.

John Moe: Just ahead, Neko Case goes from loving music to making music.

Promo:

(Phone rings.)

Stewart Wellington: Hey, is this Jesse?

Jesse: This is Jesse.

Stewart: Hey, this is Stewart Wellington, host of *The Flop House* podcast on MaxFun. I'm calling because you've been named Maximum Fun's member of the month for February.

Jesse: Nice!

Stewart: If you don't mind me asking, what prompted you to start supporting the network and become a MaxFun member?

Jesse: I was trying to think of when I started listening to *The Flop House*, but I think it was something like 2014/2015.

Stewart: Oh, wow!

Jesse: And then actually having a real job in 2021 was what allowed me to actually start supporting.

Stewart: Congratulations for having a real job and supporting my not real job.

(Jesse laughs.)

So, as member of the month, you're going to be getting a \$25 gift card to the MaxFun store, a special member of the month bumper sticker, and a special priority parking spot at MaxFun HQ in Los Angeles.

Jesse: It's awesome to support you guys, to support MaxFun. I get endless joy and entertainment.

Speaker: If you're a MaxFun member, you can become the next MaxFun member of the month. Support us at MaximumFun.org/join.

Promo:

Music: Bright, brassy music.

Alex Schmidt: Most of the plants humans eat are technically grass.

Katie Goldin: Most of the asphalt we drive on is almost a liquid.

Alex: The formula of WD-40 is San Diego's greatest secret.

Katie: Zippers were invented by a Swedish immigrant love story.

Alex: On the podcast *Secretly Incredibly Fascinating*, we explore this type of amazing stuff.

Katie: Stuff about ordinary topics like cabbage and batteries and socks!

Alex: Topics you'd never expect to be the title of the podcast: secretly, incredibly fascinating.

Katie: Find us by searching for the word (*whispers*) “secretly” in your podcast app.

Alex: And at MaximumFun.org.

(Music fades out.)

Transition: Gentle acoustic guitar.

John Moe: We're back with singer-songwriter, Neko Case.

What did music mean to you growing up?

Neko Case: Everything. It was the unbiased voice in the dark that was your friend, and said stuff that you felt that might have been complicated, that you didn't understand, or said things that you didn't understand but made you feel grown up somehow.

John Moe: Did you have a first album or first artist that you remember falling in love with?

Neko Case: I think the first band I fell in love with on my own without any rep from anybody else was probably the Monkees. I made my dad buy me the *Greatest Hits*, and wore it out.

John Moe: What was it about the Monkees?

Neko Case: The music was good, and they were super cute. Mike Nesmith was my huge crush, and yeah.

John Moe: That's adorable. So, when did you make the leap to saying, “Okay, I love music too. I can start making my own music; I can be one of the people making this happen for other people”?

Neko Case: Oh my god, I don't think I ever did.

(John laughs.)

Like, I would admit to it, but like there wasn't a time where I was like, "I have arrived; here is my diploma. I'm officially a music maker."

John Moe: But you started like drumming in bands, like punk bands around Tacoma, right?

Neko Case: I did, and it was really fun, and I really cherished those times. And it was such a great way to get aggression out. I was a pretty aggressive kid.

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So—at least past 15, I was pretty aggressive. So, you know, drumming was just a nice balancer. And I could kind of—I was still shy while being kind of aggressive. So, I could hide behind the drums.

John Moe: When did you start to come out from the drums and sing?

Neko Case: Well, I started singing at the drums, and then I made my own record in like '95/'96. And at the same time, I was also in The New Pornographers, and we started playing at the same time, my band and them—or people that I would assemble to play with for me, for the solo band, and then in The New Pornographers as well.

John Moe: Okay. Do you believe in the idea of discovering your voice? The idea that if you play for a while, you eventually discover your voice?

Neko Case: I think some people do. I'm sure there's more than one way to do it. I don't know that I ever discovered it, so much as it just felt so good to do it that it was kind of a gnawing lust to do it.

John Moe: And when did that happen?

Neko Case: Probably when I was living in Tacoma, playing drums in bands.

John Moe: Okay.

Neko Case: You know, I was probably like 16 or 17? Around then.

John Moe: So, you go on, you make your own albums, you pick up the tenor guitar, and you're touring, and you're playing—

You know, I remember when you were first putting out albums, just living in Seattle, hearing people say, "Have you heard this Neko Case album? Have you gotten a hold of this yet?" There was like a lot of buzz and excitement, and I imagine your shows were filling up.

Did that make you feel—? I think you're probably going to say it didn't make you feel like you arrived, but did that make you feel like you were onto something? Like you were on the right track?

Neko Case: It made me feel like I better keep running in this particular track. Like, okay, you can run here; run. And that's kind of what it was. I didn't want to think about it too hard for fear it would disappear.

John Moe: Did you feel like an imposter?

Neko Case: Oh yeah! I still do.

John Moe: Yeah, you still do? (*Chuckles.*)

Neko Case: Sometimes I'm on stage like—you know, I'll be having a bad day, and I'll be like, "Everybody can tell I'm a total douchebag. Uuugh." You know? Like I mean, when I'm at my baseline, I'm like, "That's ridiculous." But we all have our moments where we're like, "Oh god, I'm such an asshole. Everybody can tell. There's just smell lines coming off of me."

John Moe: So, what kind of self-care do you practice to maintain that good feeling that you talked about? That post-2015 feeling where things weren't just so sad all the time. Like, do you limit the amount of touring you do? Do you limit the amount of recording that you do? Like, how do you keep yourself in check?

Neko Case: Well, touring and recording are pretty joyful things. So, those things I don't mind doing. And you know, my partner tours with me as part of the crew. So, it's a really nice dynamic. But our house burnt down though in 2017, and that—it's been pretty difficult since. Like, we've kind of been trying to come back from that.

But it was—you know, the house burned down, and then the pandemic happened. And between taxes and that house and trying to rebuild it, there's just no—I just can't get on my feet again. And so— And I've been doing all these jobs that are like really like long-range jobs. So, it's been financially a total struggle. And I feel so tired. And I would really love to finally—I wish somebody would fucking pay me. (*Chuckles.*) 'Cause I'm sick of it. It really comes down to that. Like, just pay me already.

John Moe: Just pay me, please. Is the answer more touring?

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Like, in order to find that stability, do you need to like book out several months of tour dates?

Neko Case: Well, I mean, it's kind of like you gotta make another record—which I just did. I made another record, and it's just finished this week.

John Moe: Congratulations.

Neko Case: Thank you. Thank you. I'm very excited about it. And then I've been working on a musical for seven years. And you know, that's been amazing and a masterclass in

songwriting. But in writing a book, it's all like, "We're going to pay you later. Later, you get paid."

And it's like, I did not know time could be so slow and so fast at the same time, you know?
(*Chuckles.*)

John Moe: Well, the thing about writing a book is your job is to sell the book to the publisher, and then sell the book to the public, and then in between you get a little break where you write a book.

Neko Case: Yeah, and—but then the money, they pay you way later.

John Moe: They pay much, much later. Well, now your book is coming out as we speak. You know, it's on its way out. And when this airs, it's going to be out in the world. Given some of the pain of the stuff that you talk about in the book, you know—the really interesting stuff about your mom and your dad and just the life that you lived—are you gonna be okay talking about this in a million different interviews? Like, thank you for talking with me about it, but like—

Neko Case: I really appreciate you asking that. Thank you.

John Moe: Yeah.

Neko Case: It isn't that. I think if I'm overtired—like, I did some interviews last week when I was in New York, and I was just like so tired at the end of the day from working on the musical. Because that is crazy, hyper-collaborative all day. You know, trying to solve crazy mathematical problems that don't exist, because they're outside of mathematics in a way (*inaudible*) it, you know. So, it's draining. It's good draining. Like, you have to use your whole brain.

But then it's like, "So. Your mom. Bummer." You know? (*Chuckles.*) Like, I think it's when people—if people assume the book is about my mom, that's what I'm going to feel. Like, (*exasperated*) "For the love of Christ, come on!" She is definitely a facet of the book. She's a strand in there. But you know, there was a lot of good things in the book too. Like, I remembered so many really great things from childhood, and—you know, just where I learned to be an observer. Or remembering places and painting a picture of those places is kind of a thrill. I like that a lot.

John Moe: Did you find, in putting the book together, that made you made realizations about the connectedness of events in your life? Or just the ways that you were formed as a person? Did you get insight into that that you only could discover through the writing process, yourself?

Neko Case: Mm. Well, I think—you know, my mom faking her death is so bizarre that I had to pay attention to that for a long time in therapy. And you know, just like trying to become a person who could be present in the moment that— And you know, I'm an over-sharer with my friends. Like, my friends all know. And you know, I talk to people about it.

So, it wasn't like a secret that I let out at all. It does serve this kind of Virgo thing where, you know— I don't even really necessarily believe in astrology, but man, the Virgo description is so to a tee for me. Like, I like to organize things. So, writing a book with all this stuff in it is just this very nice— I've made this slab that I keep those memories in, and I can put them there, and they don't have to be in my brain. It's like I downloaded it to a hard drive, and now there's more room in there. So, I don't think I figured that much out about myself, but there was a relief to writing it down.

John Moe: Yeah. Yeah. You've been writing these songs for Broadway, and you've been writing a newsletter, a really successful newsletter.

[00:40:00]

What has that kind of stretching meant for you as not so much as an artist, but as a person, like not—like, being out of the album and touring cycle and into these other kind of ventures?

Neko Case: Well, I think my real thrill is observing things and trying to describe what I saw. And the musical is an adaptation of *Thelma and Louise*, and I think it's really good. And I can't wait for people to see it. And I still know nothing about Broadway, but the great thing about it is that Calli Corey, who wrote *Thelma and Louise*, is actually writing it.

(John “wow”s.)

And so, she's finally getting what she wants, which is to tell the story the way she wanted to tell the story. And there's so much backstory, and there's just— I'm so proud of it. I'm so proud of her—and you know, Tripp, the director. And it's just so hyper-collaborative. I've never done anything on that level before. And then writing things for Substack and having that kinder place to interact with fans or with people I don't know about topics that isn't like—you know, the Russian bots just descend on you—is really nice.

So, those things are kind of about observing, because *Thelma and Louise*, I'm writing for someone else; it's somebody else's vision. And when that movie came out, I was the target audience for that movie. And I watched it many times, and it gave me something huge. And so, it feels good to give back to that and try to make something really true yet, you know, sort of—what's the word I'm looking for? My AI is menopause. Menopause! What is the word I'm looking for right now?

And then menopause goes, “I don't know.”

John Moe: I don't know. You're on your own.

Neko Case: (In a posh RP British accent.) “I don't know. Sorry. I don't know.”

John Moe: When does *Thelma and Louise* open?

Neko Case: I don't know.

(They laugh.)

That's not menopause saying that. It's still in development. We're going—I'll be in England in January doing workshops, which is really fun, because we're just getting the dancers. And I just hang around with my mouth open going, “No fucking way,” being in awe of people who do musical theatre. Because I cannot believe what they can remember to do with their bodies and their brains and their voices at exactly the same time. They are true unicorns. And man, they care.

I think I made (*inaudible*) stuff when I was younger. Oof, what an asshole I was! Because these people care. Holy shit.

John Moe: Well, it's—I mean, we're from the generation—and you know, you in music—where it wasn't cool to care. It was more cool to not give a shit about anything.

Neko Case: Also, to be fair, I think there's a lot of really bad music in musicals. You know, not all of them. There's some really great music too, but I've seen some real— Like, when I was a kid, I would just be like, “Are you fucking kidding me? What the—? What? What are they saying? That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard.” And I was right.

(They laugh.)

There's a lot of things that I was real snotty about that I was wrong about. But what I was wrong about was the people doing the performing. It wasn't their fault that somebody wrote a donkey that they were now riding, you know.

(John chuckles.)

It's just not their fault. And they showed up anyway and tried to make this person's dream come true. It's like, “Oh, I just want to hug them all at the same time.”

John Moe: Do you have a post-it in front of you saying, “Don't write a donkey?”

Neko Case: No. I just try to remember that, but we're all susceptible. All of us can write donkeys. I've written a few donkeys.

John Moe: Oh, sure. *(Chuckles.)* Absolutely. Well, it sounds like you're having a lot of fun.

Neko Case: I am enjoying it. Yes.

John Moe: Oh, good. Good. The book is *The Harder I Fight, The More I Love You: A Memoir*. The author is Neko Case. Neko, thank you.

Neko Case: John, it is a pleasure. I'm so happy to see you. Thank you for the book.

John Moe: Happy to see you too, my friend.

[00:45:00]

Neko Case: Alright. Thank you.

Music: “Building Wings” by Rhett Miller, an up-tempo acoustic guitar song. The music continues quietly under the dialogue.

John Moe: Neko's book, *The Harder I Fight, The More I Love You*, is now available from booksellers.

Our show exists because people support our show. They donate money to the show to keep the show operating, so the show can keep helping people. If that sounds like a good idea to you—that we continue to exist—well, we need to hear from you. Please go to MaximumFun.org/join. You find a level that works for you. Maybe that's 5 bucks a month or 10 bucks a month—whatever it is—20. You make that call, and then select *Depresh Mode* from the list of shows. And then you are among the people making this show happen. You're producing the show, really.

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We're on BlueSky [@DepreshMode](https://bsky.app/profile/depreshmode). Our Instagram is [@DepreshPod](https://www.instagram.com/depreshpod). Our *Depresh Mode* newsletter is on Substack; search that up. I'm on BlueSky and Instagram, [@JohnMoe](https://www.instagram.com/johnmoe). Join our Preshies group on Facebook. It's listeners of the show and people just wanting to help each other out with mental health and with life, and sometimes we talk about the show. I hop on there plenty of times. Come hang out with us. Our electric mail address is DepreshMode@maximumfun.org.

Hi, credits listeners. If you want a treat, search on YouTube for “Wits, Neko Case, Number of the Beast”. It's a lot of fun. It's a show that I did several years ago—a stage show, variety show kind of thing—and Neko rocked some Iron Maiden. Hard.

Depresh Mode is made possible by your contributions. Our production team includes Raghu Manavalan, Kevin Ferguson, and me. We get booking help from Mara Davis. Rhett Miller wrote and performed our theme song, “Building Wings”. *Depresh Mode* is a production of Maximum Fun and Poputchik. I'm John Moe. Bye now.

Music: “Building Wings” by Rhett Miller.

I'm always falling off of cliffs, now

Building wings on the way down

I am figuring things out

Building wings, building wings, building wings

No one knows the reason

Maybe there's no reason

I just keep believing

No one knows the answer

Maybe there's no answer

I just keep on dancing

(Music fades out.)

Transition: Cheerful ukulele chord.

Speaker 1: Maximum Fun.

Speaker 2: A worker-owned network.

Speaker 3: Of artist owned shows.

Speaker 4: Supported—

Speaker 5: —directly—

Speaker 6: —by you!