You’re listening to Imaginary Worlds, a show about how we create them and why we suspend our disbelief. I’m Eric Molinsky.

Like a lot of kids who were into sci-fi and fantasy, my childhood bedroom was full of toys. Although I was a little OCD about displaying them. My Dad used to joke my bedroom looked more like a museum of toys, and there’s a picture of me at the age of five lining up my stuffed animals like a staff meeting.

I mean as kids; all had these imaginary friends we relied on as kids that we relied on. And over time, we stop believing in them and they just become old toys that our parents give away without us noticing. But for some people there’s that one toy or stuffed animals that survives every round of adolescence and adulthood. The relationships we have with these toys may be imaginary, but the sense of comfort and security that those toys give us is very real. So, we asked you to write in and tell us about your favorite childhood toys and stuffed animals that you still have. We wanted to know who are they? How did they become so important to you, and how are they giving you a sense of comfort during this crisis?

All right. So do you have Sirius with you by any chance?
NANCY: He’s actually back out there in the bedroom. If I can go grab him real quick.
Yeah, why don’t you go grab him real quick.
NANCY: Because he’s been forced out of retirement by my husband.

This is Nancy Farnsworth. And the Sirius that she’s referring to is Sirius Black – not the character from the Harry Potter series, but an 18-inch plush black dog that Nancy named Sirius after she read The Prisoner of Azkaban as a kid. Until that point, she had been calling the dog Blackie.

NANCY: So I go to my parents, I’m like his name Sirius now. And it just stuck. Well, so did you particularly like Sirius I mean Sirius is also a protector of Harry.
NANCY: I, I adored Sirius. I think that’s kind of why I linked onto Sirius is, so a little backstory of me is when I was a kid, I had the full haircut that kind of Daniel Radcliffe had in the movies. And I had glasses just like the intro Radcliffe’s. And so I looked like Daniel Radcliffe instead of 11 year old boy. I was an eight-year-old girl. And I also, I had this list and I was, um, and I’m autistic. So I always kind of felt like an outsider. And that’s really what Sirius ended up becoming for me is he was one of my truest friends. And that’s why I often describe him as he’s been my friend the longest.
Can you take me through maybe some of those moments when you're a kid are, or even in teenager where you know you were feeling upset about something and you and Sirius was there, you felt a comfort you.

NANCY: I think the first big memory I remember is when I was 10 my parents’ house caught on fire and my dad had taken my mom out and I was at the breakfast table, but then they both come running in and my dad says, Nancy, get out of the house now the house is on fire. And I just remember like panicking for a second and then going back to the table and grabbing Sirius cause that's all that was in my mind was the house is going to catch on fire. I need to corrupt Sirius, I can't lose him. And the first when I was first in the car is I'm watching these giant orange flames shooting out from our chimney and I'm just like so scared. And my 13-year-old sister being a 13-year-old looked at me and goes, we're going to lose our house and you brought the dog and I am just looked at her and I'm like I can't leave him in there. And I, that's all I could say the entire time as I'm hugging him close to me. Eventually they were able to put out the fire. We didn't lose the house or anything and my mom had us go in quickly to get ready for school, just send us off to school like a normal day. And she turned to me and she saw Sirius and she's like, just bring him to school today. So he was there when my life literally caught on fire and he was there when my life figuratively caught on fire because I also, I suffer from depression and anxiety and I actually, I'm a suicide attempt survivor and he was basically there in that moment is, I just remembered after I, I almost tried to take my life is I changed my mind last minute and I remember just going on my bed, grabbing him and sobbing and to have for like hours, like, it's the reason why he's still here after 20 years.

Yeah. It sounds like he's a witness to, to everything you've been through.

NANCY: Oh yeah. He's a witness. He's also, he's he a participant. He's a, uh, he's a heckler. He has. Um, he has a very distinctive voice in my head and it's, we, we dubbed it the Sirius voice. Like, I know this sounds crazy, but that's just kind of how I imagined. If he could talk like what he'd be saying to me,

Well, you know, I need you to do the voice right now. I need to hear that voice, the Sirius voice. It's up here in a nasally kind of gravelly play. It's always been there. I don't know.

So when you like, that's such a grownup voice, like when you were a kid, did, did he still talk like that in your mind?

NANCY: Oh yeah. He always talked like that. We read the fifth Harry Potter book and I use that voice after we got the, the chapter where Sirius died is, and my dad just looked over because I'm holding Sirius and he's, he's waiting for me to start bursting to tears and all that I could come out with in the, in the Sirius voice, wait, I die and my father just looks at me and closes the book. And no one knew what to say because I knew that Sirius had a voice, but I didn't think they quite realize that that was the voice.
I want to hear a Harry Potter audiobook with Nancy doing that voice for Sirius.

Of course, she kept Sirius into adulthood – but his presence in life became the only issue she and her husband argued over.

NANCY He was like, why? Why is the dog stay on a shelf all the time? Yes. Sirius he's not the dog. Okay. Why is Sirius on the shelf? He's enjoying retirement. Dave, leave him alone. It always kind of comes out and it always, basically I ended up winning until recently with the whole quarantine and stuff going on is he cleans his, how he deals with stress. And so he, he came out to me, it's like, you know, we have a five month old now. This stuffed animal really shouldn't be living in our closet when we have someone who loves stuffed animals. So he comes out to me and plopped Sirius down on my sons play mat and my son looks at Sirius, it looks at me hats Sirius on the black back and then kisses his head and then he rolls back over. And so I basically, I looked, I'm like, okay, if he's going to secrete Sirius respect, unlike you, I'll let him keep Sirius.

_Oh, so now's he's in your son's room._

NANCY: Yeah. So now he basically, he lives, my son has a bassinet next to our bed and so he used the protector of the bassinet. I find comfort from him and a lot of times when I will break him out for my son is, it's usually five in the morning and my son's crying and my husband's trying to go back to sleep and I, and I'll just, I'll pull out Sirius and I'll just be like, listen, we got Sirius here. We both have to calm down and it's every single is going to be okay.

MUSIC TRANSITION

_Um, all right. Oh, do you have patch with you, by the way?_

STEVE: Of course. Yeah.

_All right. Let's take a look. Oh, cute._

STEVE: Laughs

This is Steve Romenesko. He also has a stuffed dog from his childhood that gives him comfort. In this case it’s Patch, from 101 Dalmatians – the animated movie, not the live action remake. Of course, Patch was one of the many offspring of the dogs Pongo and Perdita. Patch got his name because he has a black spot over his eye.

And Patch -- the stuffed animal -- helped Steve get through a lot of health issues. Steve has his first liver transplant at the age of 14, and another one at 25. Then at the age of 30, he had his colon removed. He started to rely on Patch when his
health became a serious problem as a kid, and his mother kept bringing him to doctors where they lived in Minnesota.

STEVE: I grew up in a relatively small town and the, the specialists were in a much bigger town in the state capitol. I can definitely remember her in the two hour trip there and then tour a trip back to the specialists, which were, were intimidated and experiences that I had patch sitting with me in the, you know, in the minivan and the back the whole time that I would be holding onto him because it was something that, you know, help to reduce those anxieties that I would, you know, sit clutching him and holding him as we went. And we would go into the appointment and then I would come back out to the van and know that patch would be there waiting for me.

And was Patch always with you in the hospital and the car? Like did you, was he, was, was that like, you know, I mean like surgery, you, would you sort of leave them in the hospital room?

STEVE: Yes. Um, yeah, so patch and that never came into like the or anything like that because that's a pretty, pretty controlled, controlled space. But he would always be in the room waiting for me. So four or five months ago I had my colon removed and it's, it's a pretty big operation that was in the hospital about a week. And you know, luckily I was fortunate enough that my partner was able to stay with me the entire time. She was an amazing support through all of it. But Patch was also there too. It was, again, part of when we go to the hospital for big things, we always bring patch. He's always that support. He's always the comfort. Um, it's an easy, you know, he's an easy thing to grab onto and clutch onto and hold. And we were at the point in my hospitalization that we knew I was getting out in the next two or three days. And really the only big hurdle we had left was to remove a surgical drain, which is an experience that I've had before and one that I really don't love, um, in one that can be, you know, pretty unpleasant. And then was something I was really anxious about. So we had talked in, the doctors were in that morning and it said, yeah, we're going to take all that surgical drain, but not today. We'll do that tomorrow. And not five minutes after my partner leaves. Um, a doctor walks in and says, Hey, it's time to remove that surgical drain. And I had a moment of slight panic that was, but we did said, we're going to do tomorrow. What, what happened to that? And she, she said, you know, like, we're just going to take it out. We, you know, it'll, it's for the best. And I said, yeah, that sounds good. But a little bit worried that I didn't have, you know, my partner around for support in this time when I really needed some support and I was able to look over and I saw that we have patch sitting on the window sill. So I was able to grab patch and clutch onto him and hold him as it happened and got the surgical drain removed and it's something where I think it, it really would have been a lot tougher without patch there and it would've been a lot more difficult. And it was, it was really comforting that he was there for me.
Given his health issues, Steve has no plans to go outside for the foreseeable future. He lives with his wife; they have a great relationship, but Steve says the reason why Patch is important to him is because if he feels like if he told his loved ones every fear he was feeling from moment to moment, he worries that he’d be a burden on them.

STEVE: Sometimes especially when I was going through a lot of my medical things where my emotions were changing by the second that, you know, when I express one emotion by the time it leaves my mouth, I'm feeling differently. Um, I can communicate that as quickly as I need to with Patch. Whereas it would be a more laborious process to talk it out with another human being to say like, this is why I'm feeling what I'm feeling. Here are all the pieces surrounding that this as well. So it was affecting it. This is what also going on in very quickly becomes a very multifaceted thing that you need to explain to an almost like you're reconcilable degree. But Patch just gets it instantaneously, he gets these things. But if I were to bring Pongo then Oh, Pongo doesn't even understand. He's never even been to any of the appointments. Of course I'm bringing patch

Oh, you've Pongo too?

STEVE: Uh, yeah, actually I do. I, I think I've got them in the closet.

Wait, so, okay, that's so interesting. See, I was thinking you fall in love with Patch cause he's a cute character and then that's your 100 Dalmatians. Like, why, why does that particular patch why, why, you know, why wasn't Pongo with you during all that time?

STEVE: I don't know. I, I think part of it in thinking about it, um, is that patch in regards, when you look at 101 Dalmatians, um, patch is the one that's pretty different. When you, when you see him, you know, like if you were to scan across the whole crowd, he's the one with the patch on his eye. Any scheme is the different one. In growing up, that was often me, whether that be, you know, like being a nerdy kid and that, you know, like dealing with that when I was in school and then moving on to, you know, in middle school F after I move on from elementary school, you see that I'm suddenly the kid who's the different one because I'm the one with all the health problems. And patch was always the one that was also different because of, you know, the, the patch on his eye and for whatever reason I identified with that. I think that's part of the bond that brought it together.

MUSIC TRANSITION

After the break, we’ll hear about some toys from across the Atlantic, or as they say in Britain, from across the pond.

BREAK
Jen Cresswell lives in Scotland, but she’s English. Given my limited knowledge, I assumed she probably gets a lot of flak for being English there -- but she says no.

JEN: This is one thing I love most about Scotland. The definition of Scottish nationality is do you live in Scotland. Do you feel Scottish? Can you put up with the food and weather?

Her answer is yes to all three. In fact, she’s really frustrated she can’t do her job now, which is being a tour guide in Edenborough.

When we talked over Zoom, I could see her room was full of pop culture memorabilia, and there was a big picture of Indiana Jones behind her. But her favorite childhood toy is a generic stuffed horse named Joe. And it wasn’t even her horse to begin with. When she was a little kid, the horse was in her brother’s room.

JEN: But I decided therefore the, the toy horses, we’re going to be mine because I like horses. My brother wasn’t into horses, he was into Star Wars and so he had Joe in his room. I was like, he doesn’t really care much about that toy. He wasn’t called Joe then he, my brother called her Nay Nay, horses making a noise. He was Nay Nay so like, yeah, the care about that, I’m going to take it mine out. Yank.

She was right, her brother didn’t care. And she decided the horse’s name Nay Nay had to go.

JEN: Ridiculous name. So I was trying to think of a new name and for some reason I thought Smokey Joe was a good name for a horse. It kind of sounded American and you know, Cowboys, horses this and it just kind of like, I just ended up calling him Joe and just got shortened to Joe. I remember this really well. I came to the kitchen and I was like, mom, I've got a new name for the pony domain name. And goes, Oh, you know, she's watching. She was actually washing it. You're like, Oh yeah, what are you going to call them? And I said, I'm going to call him Joe and she literally froze, turn and look to me. I was like, what did you pick that name? And then she told me the story about how we got Joe.

The story went back before she was born, actually = before her brother was born – back to when their father served in the Royal Air Force during the Cold War.
JEN: They had to do really dangerous flying. Really scary stuff. You know, this is full top gun below radar. My dad's shrunk an inch due to the G-Force.

**Wow. Really?**

JEN: Yes. He shrunk an inch. Really intense stuff. It was a case of if it was going to get to a ward, they had to know how to do it. So they had to do it all in the training.

In the early 1980s, her father was sent to the U.S. for training. And he had become good friends with another pilot in their squadron named Joe.

JEN: And one of the big things they did was red flag in Nevada, which was, um, below radar training. It all the canyons and there's, it's there. It was very early on. So I think they go out for about a week that Joe crashed. They don't know what happened. Um, my, that nerve as well as you can know someone after a few months. But it's a really weird way to form a friendship because in a way you have to get close. You're trusting your lives to these people.

**So then where did the horse this stuff do a horse come into this?**

JEN: They wouldn't allow the squatting to go back for the funeral. So Joe's remains would play back to the UK, but they want that disgorging go back. They had to do the rest of the training. Um, this is where the military wives come in. Um, the ministry wives when they will come like an unsung part of the false. So because the men couldn't come back, the women went to represent the husbands. They went to support Joe’s widow. And my mother at the time was heavily pregnant with my brother. It was not an easy pregnancy and she nearly lost my brother. She was hospitalized, um, because the stress, they thought she would actually miscarrry my brother. And so she was putting the hospital, but she, I felt it was her duty to go to the funeral, to be there for a friend to represent that as well.

After the funeral, Joe’s widow came to see Jen’s mom, and she gave her the stuffed horse as a present for Jen’s bother.

When her mother told her the story of Joe, Jen thought it was spooky that she had decided to name the horse Joe, but it felt strangely reassuring. Also, she really loved that horse.

JEN: The way I describe it is Joe fitted. So, when you hold him just like the way his body is shaped, it just fits into my arms, I still can't go to sleep at this is like confessions here. I still can't go to sleep at night unless I hug something or have a toy in my bed. Um, I'm single. I live alone. So even now, I can't get to sleep unless I know Joe's dad before I go turn off the lights, I have to know where Joe is, when things scary, things happen. When sad things happen, it's natural for me to kind of like go to bed snuggling my blanket and
hook Joe. That’s a kind of comfort there I think because it’s that stability, you know, if there’s a big change or something happens, he’s the same obviously more threadbare and gradually losing hair and stuff. But he’s still here and it’s an anchor in some ways. I really should insure it. But you know, financially he’s worth probably about two pounds. But yeah. Yeah. It’s funny I’m saying that and I’m calling him closer to me.

I know, I noticed that.

JEN: Yeah. It’s so bizarre. I can’t put into words some of the things about Joe like why do I feel this? Oh, see, I don’t know.

When you think about it from an adult perspective, it can be baffling why you still feel attached to certain inanimate objects and why they still feel alive to you -- although usually the toy itself is cute, with big eyes or a sweet little face. Or it’s part of a larger pop culture storyline that you can connect it to. But one of the emails we got was from a listener whose favorite childhood toy was a pair of red plastic bricks.

Jean Klare (zjon klar-ay) lives in The Netherlands. When he was 7-years old, his family went on vacation in Northern Italy. After a week, he became very sick. He had trouble breathing. His parents rushed him to the local hospital, and it was a very old hospital run by nuns.

JEAN: It wasn’t really intense. They, uh, jabbed, uh, a syringe in my butt every day, uh, which really hurt, and they made, uh, x-rays from my chest and yeah, that kind of stuff.

Even worse, he didn’t speak Italian. The staff did not speak Dutch. They mostly communicated through hand gestures. His parents came to see him, but the other boys in the hospital who were local were getting visited constantly by their entire extended families.

JEAN: They got these huge presents from their families like electric tanks, train sets, and these, these really nice big model cars. And uh, also, uh, Lego sets and the boy next to me in the bed next to me, he had these, his whole bed covered in Italian, counterfeit Lego bricks. And that was my favorite toy. I played with Legos all day, every day at home. I was really frustrated that the did not want do let me touch them.

It’s funny cause I think I remember I’m in about the same age as you and I do remember there being a lot more counterfeit Legos out there that other companies would make. I think Lego eventually started suing them all. That’s why they all disappeared. Did you recognize that immediately? Did you, you’re like, these are Legos but not Legos.
JEAN: I think I would've noticed immediately, immediately when I picked him up. It was, they were off color, a little bit lighter. Not as precisely molded too.

Do you remember asking him if he could play with his Legos?
JEAN: Yeah, well I, I would've, I suppose gestured, uh, to him for permission. So yeah, I might've missed, misinterpreted my, uh, request. But yeah, you just would not let me near it near them after a while. At the end of the afternoon, I guess they made him put them away. That made all of the kids put all their toys away I guess for, for a meal or something. And uh, I noticed that he had dropped some off under his bed and that's when I just slipped out of my bed and crawled under it and grab them.

So once you had them, you only had a few Legos, were you able to secretly play with them?
JEAN: Yeah, I guess I had a, I don't know, maybe three or four. Uh, yeah, it's not much of, not much if it comes to construction set, but yeah, it's like a nice, uh, twiddly thing you can do when you, you just want your, your, your hands to do something, just stack them and break them apart and stack them again. Yeah, like a nice little activity.

So how long were you there?
JEAN: Uh, probably a week. Seven or eight days.

So you got back and you have these Lego pieces, this Italian counterfeit Lego pieces that are off color. Why did you not just throw them away?
JEAN: Well, it wasn't, it was a bounty. Right. Uh, also in my adulthood have become rather nostalgic person. So yeah. I just don't really like to throw stuff away. And it has a, a memory attached to it.

But were able to snap them together with your real Legos.
JEAN: Them being off-color, they didn't exactly fit right and they stood out being off-color. But, uh, they worked. And when, uh, my son, uh, was old enough to transition from toddler size, uh, Lego bricks to proper breaks. I gave him all of mine and use them to play together.

Did you tell him the story of those off-color bricks?
JEAN: Yeah, we, we, we came across them while playing of course. So then I told him the story about how, how they ended up in, in, in the collection and what, why they are different.

You also, when you wrote us, you said something that, that was very poetic, that, that you actually had after a while kind of identify with those Legos that you felt like the fact that you yourself didn't quite fit in.
JEAN: Yeah. I was reminded of the, of the, of my time in the Italian hospital, uh, recently when the pandemic aid in Italy. And I've thought about, thought about my experiences in the Italian hospital. And so that's why I hadn't been thinking about this some more recently. Yeah. I was there, I was like this sick a foreign kid who didn't speak a language. I didn't, I didn't fit in. And just like the two red bricks that don't really fit into my pile of Lego. Oh, well my son's bottled Legos now.
So where, so the Lego’s now are, um, they’re just mixing in with your son’s Legos.
JEAN: Yeah, he’s 20, so he doesn’t play with him.
Oh, so that’s interesting. I so, so yeah, first time I thought, I guess I thought he was still young enough to just keep playing with Legos. So, so why are they also just sitting in a box or a bag right now? Where are they?
JEAN: Yeah, they’re in boxes is a room, has a little attic, and that’s where they sit and they wait for, yeah, maybe when he has kids and then they will play with them. And I hope I'll get to tell the story again.

MUSIC TRANSITION

In working on this episode, one of our listeners suggested that we should look at the painter Jennifer Maher Coleman. She makes portraits of childhood toys. Her paintings of Playmobil figures and old Transformers and baby dolls are rendered with acrylics on canvas.

JENNIFER: When I had taken on this, this business and this idea of painting toys that had seemed very lighthearted to me and very like a sort of a cheerful theme and a cheerful subject matter to be painting. But in a lot of cases there was a strange dark edge and a sense that the toys were standing in for affection, were support for grief or loss. And there was some real interesting sort of twisted psychology behind what I was told about the toys.

I was curious to hear Jennifer’s perspective because she’s now seen so many different varieties of beloved childhood toys. Most of the commissions are from parents who want to memorialize their child’s favorite toys before the kids grow out of them – but many times she says the parents are still struggling to understand why their children fell in love with these particular toys.

JENNIFER: My favorite thing is when a family will give a toy to a baby in hopes that they'll love it and it'll be like a real classy toy, like a nit toy or an expensive toy or the popular toy that parents are giving to their kids and the child just isn't having it and falls in love with something that is just trashy and awful. Like one of my, one of my first commissions was for this weird larger than life plastic, My Little Pony that had sort of flirtatious seductive eyes and was in a weird pose. And the mother who was commissioning it said, I hate this thing. It is so disturbing to me, but I want to have a portrait for my child of their toy and this is the toy they love. They don't love any of the cool toys I bought them. The heart wants what the heart wants. You know, I'm so amused when they still come to me and have a portrait done of that because they’re
just, they just admit it. They just can't, you know, they can't win this war. Um, to me that is a hilarious every time mean those are my favorite portraits.

*That's wild. Have you had any particularly bizarre record strange requests over the years that like, well this one stands out because nobody ever asked for this again?*

JENNIFER: I mean there have just been lots of interesting toys that you just can't believe somebody loves. Like one of my first commissions was this absolutely horrible vintage monkey faced thing. It was like a disgusting plush toy with a plastic monkey face that was completely worn out and like it looks terrifying. Absolutely terrifying. And it was this person's husbands, absolutely favorite thing in the whole world and just beloved. And she had to have a portrait of it for him. So, and its name was chapel. I mean, come on.

*So now I'm curious, what percentage of your clients would you say are people who are, are doing these paintings for their adult partners?*

JENNIFER: Oh, large amount. I think maybe because they're the, maybe because they're the new partner. There might be some connection between, you know, like how much love your, your spouse has for this other object. And he also loves you.

*Yeah. We could share the love.*

JENNIFER: Yeah, it's been fascinating. Um, there was another cute thing where, um, there was a couple who, um, someone was making a portrait of their two favorite toys from their childhoods as a gift for their baby's nursery. The baby was going to be born soon and they wanted to paint, um, the, the couple's favorite toys together and what they were was two Gund bears. I don't know if you remember from when you were a kid. Everybody had these Gund bears. They were the same color. They each had the same color bear, and apparently when they were little, um, both of them had carried the bears around by the nose in their mouths. So they would walk around with the bear's nose in their mouth and just carry the bear that way, and then met and got married. I mean, to me, things like that are just bananas. I mean, that's a match made in heaven or something.

*These toys are expressions of love. Why you fall in love with something or someone can be hard to define, but you know it when you feel it. Or as Jennifer put it, the heart wants what the heart wants.*

I don't think it's a coincidence that so many of these stories tie back to moments when we felt vulnerable, when the adults couldn't give us what we needed because we were so young, and we didn’t have the language communicate our needs. So, we imagine something that could understand us. And I feel a sense of comfort knowing that humans are hard wired to create loving relationships anywhere, anyhow. And that is what helps us survive.
One more thing before we go. While I was interviewing people, I was thinking this is all very interesting, but it doesn’t apply to me personally. Then I remembered an old childhood friend, a red and white pokadotted stuffed mouse that is still in my old bedroom at my parents’ house.

DAD: Bring Mousey in here.
MUM: Do you want to see Mousey?

*Ah, there he is.*

DAD: Oh, he's adorable. I want you to know that the minute you were born right afterwards I went to the gift shop at the hospital and I wanted to find something and I saw Mousey and I knew right away that that he, he was going to be yours. I just knew it. I looked at him and he was on the shelf waiting for you.

*Did you think it was, uh, so did you think as a, of course when I was little, I had all these stuffed animals and everything. Did you think it was unusual that I held onto Mousey all these years?*

MUM: No.
DAD: Well, he's very special why would you --

MUM: No, you held on to Darth Vader in the Millennium Falcon, and we have the Smurfs in your cabinet.
DAD: But I would say he was your first comfort toy.

*I mean, it's funny, I didn't bring them to college. I didn't bring him to LA. I didn't bring him to New York. In fact, I totally forgot he was even there until I started working on this and I suddenly realized, oh my God, I have a stuffed animal. It's just like, it just makes me more comfortable to know at your place, not mine.*

MUM: That means we can never move. Can you imagine?
DAD: He'd come with us
MUM: Can you imagine if we move into a senior living.

*Oh, right. You can't, you wouldn't take a Mousey with you to senior living.*

MUM: It certainly could, but we might not have the room.
DAD: Well, they might think we belong in a senior place. If we had to bring our little Mousey with us!

*In that case, I would take custody of Mousey, for safekeeping. Although for now, I know that he's being well taken care of.*

MUM: I'm not going to put them back until I saw him up and take care of all his, his little bruises. He was fixed up here. I see. But he needs to have a little work on is um,
When you said you're going to fix him, I thought that was unnecessary, but actually now that his arm is falling off, I am going to keep him. I guess I might as well.

MUM: It's not falling off actually just the back's needs.
DAD: Actually, his shoulder is similar to mine. I have a torn rotator cuff and I think mostly it's the same one.
MUM: But I can fix him easily, I have heavy, heavy thread.

That's it for this week, thank you for listening and thank you to everyone who's stories we didn't use. We enjoyed reading them all. Special thanks to Nancy Farnsworth, Steve Romenesko, Jen Cresswell, Jean Klare, Jennifer Maher Coleman and my parents.

I'll have a slideshow of the toys and stuffed animals we discussed on the Imaginary Worlds Instagram page. There's also a slideshow of Jennifer Coleman's paintings. By the way, she and her husband have a band. This song is dedicated to their daughter, who likes to imagine her life is a big reality show, and their home is a dollhouse that we're all playing with. I put links to her music and artwork in the show notes.

My assistant producer is Stephanie Billman. You can like the show on Facebook. I tweet at emolinsky and imagine worlds pod. If you like the Imaginary Worlds, please leave a review wherever you get your podcasts, or a shout out on social media. That helps people discover the show.

The best way to support Imaginary Worlds is to donate on Patreon. At different levels you can get either free Imaginary Worlds stickers, a mug, a t-shirt, and a link to a Dropbox account, which has the full-length interviews of every guest in every episode. You can learn more at imaginary worlds podcast dog.