

Ditch Diggers #52

January 18, 2018

Theme Song: [00:00:05] Ditch Diggers appear, ain't no wannabes here. With some not so nice advice for your writing career. To be clear, no punches will be pulled, but the punch may be spiked, how they like before they get on the mic. To my left we got the mighty Mur Lafferty, and if I piss her off, believe me, she'll come after me. And her co-host Matt F'n Wallace on the right, yeah she may be half his height, but she could take him in a fight. So settle in folks, buckle in, and boot up. Time to meddle in a way to make you write or shut up. It's hard work, but the perk is that it's fun and exciting. Facebook will still be there when you're done writing. Ditch Diggers!

Mur: [00:00:46] Coming to you live from Morgan Freeman's snow bungalow. It is the Ditch Diggers with Mur Lafferty and Matt Wallace. Happy New Year!

Matt: [00:00:55] Happy New Year, Mur. It's our first episode of 2018. These are exciting times.

Mur: [00:01:00] These are exciting times. Why are they exciting, Matt?

Matt: [00:01:02] I'm also really ... Well I mean, they're exciting because we're in a snow bungalow, which you think would be a shelter to protect you from the cold, but in typical Morgan Freeman fashion it's actually a bungalow made out of snow. Which I find interesting.

Mur: [00:01:14] It's also wired with a big screen TV.

Matt: [00:01:19] It is. Which is also made out of ice. Which you wouldn't think would work. It must be some kind of bananas Superman Krypton technology. Which honestly, if you went over to Morgan Freeman's house, and he's like, I have fictional comic book technology in my living room, you'd be like, eh hh it's fair play, he's Morgan Freeman.

Mur: [00:01:39] Yeah, actually, I think he calls this his Fortrait [*sic*] ... Fortress of Solitude.

Matt: [00:01:45] He does, and no one would ever think of suing him for copyright infringement.

Mur: [00:01:49] No, definitely not.

Matt: [00:01:51] Nobody wants to face that voice in court.

Mur: [00:01:54] Yes, he is the only person who represents himself who is not a fool.

Matt: [00:01:59] He is not a fool at all. That should be ... that's gonna be his next movie. He's gonna defend-

Mur: [00:02:08] Not a Fool?

Matt: [00:02:08] Not a Fool, and he defends himself in courts. And it's just him talking in court for two hours and everybody's perfectly happy with that.

Mur: [00:02:14] Oh, yeah, that's Oscar material right there.

Matt: [00:02:17] I love that after, what, two years ... two years and change, we haven't run out of Morgan Freeman material yet. Two years, three years? How many-

Mur: [00:02:27] A little over two.

Matt: [00:02:28] A little over two, oh-

Mur: [00:02:29] Close to three. I don't know. Everything's so-

Matt: [00:02:29] ... I don't know.

Mur: [00:02:31] ... close together. Somebody asked me what I was doing, if I was free a weekend, and I'm like, "But you're not free this weekend 'cause you have a wedding to

go to.” And they're like, “Yeah that was last year.”

Matt: [00:02:45] Your entire experience of life has become like the ghost movies.

Mur: [00:02:46] Yeah.

Matt: [00:02:46] Where they're like, “But Mur, he's been dead for 10 years!”

Mur: [00:02:56] Exactly. Is Betty White dead?

Matt: [00:02:59] No, Betty White is 96.

Mur: [00:03:02] She could be 96 and dead at the same time.

Matt: [00:03:05] She could, but in this instance, I assume you're asking because she's trending on the social medias.

Mur: [00:03:11] No, I didn't know if she was trending or not. I was not looking at the social medias, I was actually thinking about it the other day. I think somebody said something that implied that they were talking about her in the past tense, and I was wondering, did she die? Did I miss it?

Matt: [00:03:26] No, I will literally ... right now, she was trending because she celebrated her 96th birthday, or was going to celebrate her 96th birthday. So, it's interesting that you were thinking about her independently of her trending on the social medias. You're very intuitive, Mur.

Mur: [00:03:48] Well, Happy birthday, Betty White!

Matt: [00:03:50] Happy birthday, Betty! They're meaningless though. She's immortal. I think we've established that at this point. She can't be killed by conventional weapons. People have tried.

Mur: [00:03:54] You know Morgan Freeman has a shrine to her, but we haven't come from that room yet.

Matt: [00:03:58] No, well that's sacred. Even we wouldn't violate the sanctity of Morgan Freeman's Betty White shrine.

Mur: [00:04:03] We wouldn't? Oh yeah, we wouldn't. Totally not.

Mur: [00:04:11] It's a new year, and with the turn of last year everything was pretty much shit for you. But things are better for you now. That's a segue. Take it and run, Matt.

Matt: [00:04:22] I just realized you were giving me a segue at the beginning of the show, but instead of utilizing that I chose to talk about Morgan Freeman's snow bungalow. I know, I have ... I'm gonna get to it this time. I'm slow, but I get there, which is kind of the thrust of the story I'm about to tell. It's not really a story, it's more news. Anyway, I have a new full time writing job.

Mur: [00:04:40] Woo hoo!

Matt: [00:04:41] I know, it's very exciting. Yes, listeners of the podcast will know that I talked several times last year about my job search and wanting to improve my financial circumstances. With all the new things going on in my life, and having gotten married last year, and us purchasing and moving into a new home last year, I wanted to supplement my writing income with more income, because you need money or they won't let you buy things. So, for about six or eight months last year I ... that was part of my full-time job was job hunting. It was a very long arduous process filled with rejection and peril at every turn. There wasn't really peril at every turn, but there was a lot of rejection.

Matt: [00:05:32] I think at one point there I was sending out at least ten applications every weekday, and interviewing several times a week. None of it was really coming to anything, and you can get discouraged after a while. It was my big goal for the year was by the end of the year I will have secured a new full time writing job in a related field, related to what I do normally. It was looking like that wasn't ... I guess this has turned

into a story. I said it was news, but now I'm telling it like a story. Which is fine. We're storytellers; it's what we do. But literally it got into December and I thought, well there's no way anything's going to happen. And then out of the blue I got an e-mail from a gentleman who is the CEO of a media company based here in Orange County. They do brand building for companies and products and brands all over the world. And he wanted to have what he described as a 15 minute conversation with me, and that 15 minute conversation over the course of several weeks turned into ... over the course of several weeks turned into an offer for a job as content strategist and brand storyteller for his company, which I accepted. Literally signed the contract the week before New Year's and I started on January 2nd

Mur: [00:06:46] Yay!

Matt: [00:06:48] Which I still can't believe I was able to get. I mean this is again, that was an arbitrary measurement that meant nothing, wanting to have it by the end of the year, and start the new year with the job. But I'm still, it's ... especially coming from being a freelance writer, where you can't get anything done in December ever, anything business related. It's like virtually impossible. That's what most of my friends that I've told have been most impressed by. It isn't even the job that I got or anything or the accomplishment of doing that. It's like, "You were able to close on that over the holiday?" That's bananas.

Matt: [00:07:25] But anyway, so yes, so I started January 2nd, I'm almost three weeks in now. I'm having a great time. I'm getting to write in some form or fashion every day, or create content in some form or fashion everyday. It's challenging. The team I'm on is fantastic. I get to work remotely, which is amazing and was one of my dream items for the job that I actually didn't think I would hit. So yeah, I was ... after a long arduous search and sticking to my guns, I was able to secure exactly the job I wanted and exactly the situation I wanted, and I'm very happy.

Mur: [00:07:58] That's awesome, dude. I'm really happy for you.

Matt: [00:08:00] Thank you, and I appreciate all your support and your encouragement throughout the process. You were there for most of this stuff, hearing about it, and giving me your mighty shoulder to lean on. It's wee, but it's mighty, and I appreciate

that. So, thank you, Mur. Thank you to all listeners out there who were on my Twitter who were also encouraging me. It was a group effort, but I'm gonna keep the money.

Mur: [00:08:28] That's fair.

Matt: [00:08:27] That is fair. I feel like it's fair. But still, I appreciate that. So that's my big news, and I'm pretty happy about that. The other new thing that I started at the end of last year, the [YouTube channel](#), the vlog and everything is going really strong. I'm happy about that. We're up to almost 400 subscribers, and I've only been doing it a few months, if anything. So, really appreciate everybody on Team Hamshackle who's made, first of all, Team Hamshackle a thing, and everybody who's been watching and subscribing to the vlog and just helping me out. I appreciate it. Things are going good right now. Things are going good right now. My last Sin du Jour book is coming out in April. I'm completing the series and the story, which is amazing. Seven books-

Mur: [00:09:07] Yeah, we should do a giveaway of all seven books.

Matt: [00:09:10] We absolutely should. We absolutely ... when I have all seven books, we will do a giveaway of all seven books. That's a great idea. So, yeah. So how are you, Mur? How is your 2018 beginning? I know you're having an annoying day, but hopefully overall things are good.

Mur: [00:09:26] Yeah, I've got kind of a roller coaster thing going on right now. My dog had to have a second minor surgery just like the minor surgery she had a couple of months ago, except ... or a couple of ... god, I don't even know when it was ... December, maybe? But yeah, the thing that they said, "Oh, we don't need to worry about that," the first time they did the surgery, now they needed to worry about it, so we got to pay for an entire second surgery, and she did not respond to sedation very well. We had a weekend of vomit, and finally my husband had to take her in for an anti-nausea medicine, and she's doing better now. But that was fun.

Matt: [00:10:08] You posted a picture of her in her little socks or whatever on the Twitters not reacting well to the sedation, and, I just, it was so heartbreaking. I was actually mad at you.

Mur: [00:10:20] That was just her being sedated. It was afterwards ... It might have been the ... Afterwards she was acting like a dog who was sedated. It was like the next day is when she started throwing up and everything.

Matt: [00:10:34] No yeah, that was your point when I reacted so badly to it. "She's basically just sleeping. You're complaining that I posted a picture of a dog." So, you know what it was? It was the little socks and the knowledge it was Doctor related. That was enough. That's all you need, to look at a puppy and go, "Oh my god, this is the worst thing I've ever seen in my life."

Mur: [00:10:50] And the little sock had stars on it.

Matt: [00:10:52] It did. The little socks had stars on them. It was heartbreaking. You're a monster. You're a monster for doing that to me.

Mur: [00:11:01] How am I a monster for giving my dog proper medical care and the fact that the vet have cute things on their bandages?

Matt: [00:11:07] You are not a monster for getting your dog proper medical care. Your doctor's not a monster for liking cute things. You're a monster for posting that picture, knowing it would make me feel feelings, and you know how much I hate feeling feelings.

Mur: [00:11:20] You're a changed man, dude. You're married now.

Matt: [00:11:23] Yeah well, that doesn't mean-

Mur: [00:11:24] I saw you have feelings, like a lot, in my [crosstalk 00:11:27]. I saw feelings all over the place.

Matt: [00:11:27] I know! And it was very exhausting, and I would like to take a break from it now, and I don't need your dog pictures stirring up things in me.

Mur: [00:11:37] Fine, I'll warn you before I post any more dog pictures, but now see we've completely buried the lead, because the day that my dog had the surgery is the

day that I found out that *Six Wakes* was nominated for the Philip K. Dick Award.

Matt: [00:11:48] There you go!

Mur: [00:11:51] It was a bit of a shock. I just, never considered that award. So that's ...

Matt: [00:11:59] Well you never consider anyone is going to like anything you do ever. Which I get, because I'm the same way, but first of all, congratulations!

Murt: [00:12:10] Thank you.

Matt: [00:12:10] Philip K. Dick Award! Part of the Holy Trinity. It's a big deal.

Mur: [00:12:15] Yeah, I'm just stunned.

Matt: [00:12:18] I am not at all stunned. I knew you're going to get something. I was watching ... Jim and I were both watching the buzz. We both had our fingers on the pulse out there. There's been *Six Wakes* buzz a'going this awards season, so I didn't know what it was going ... I still don't know how it's going to finish. There are more awards, Mur, that haven't been announced yet. You could be up for those as well.

Mur: [00:12:37] It's possible.

Matt: [00:12:38] You could do the William Gibson. You could do the hat trick.

Mur: [00:12:40] No.

Matt: [00:12:41] You could do the hat ... don't say you couldn't do the hat trick. You could do the hat trick.

Mur: [00:12:43] I Don't think I could do the hat trick.

Matt: [00:12:45] You do wear many hats. We've established that on this show before.

Mur: [00:12:49] These are different hats. These are very different hats we're talking about.

Matt: [00:12:52] There's no hat too big for your head. I don't know what that means, but-

Mur: [00:12:57] Neither do I.

Matt: [00:12:57] ... it sounded good when I formulated it. But no, that is a massive thing to be nominated for the Philip K. Dick Award. Congratulations, and the book totally, totally deserves it. You wrote a great book.

Mur: [00:13:06] Thank you.

Matt: [00:13:07] So, that's awesome. So we're both doing okay. Not sucking. I feel like we can improve on all these things throughout the year, but that's the nitrous in the tank to start out 2018. I'll take it.

Mur: [00:13:26] And we ... Despite the fact that you guys have not hit the level on Patreon, Matt and I have already decided that we're going weekly. So we're going to be recording every Wednesday.

Matt: [00:13:43] We are. We have a schedule and everything. And you can't [crosstalk 00:13:50]-

Mur: [00:13:50] Because of your day job.

Matt: [00:13:51] Because of my fancy day job, yes. So yeah, I'm getting everything more regimented this year. That's really ... first of all, I have no choice. But second of all, I've just decided it's a good thing to do. So everything I'm doing, the day job, the podcast, the blogging, and then of course writing all the fiction that I write because that's still a thing that I do. I try to become much more regimented about everything and put everything in a proper reoccurring position, because if I don't, I'll never get to anything ever. I have to know there's a time and a place for all these things, and I have to know that I'm supposed to be in that time and place doing those things at that time and in that place. I said time and place a lot just then, but that's okay.

Mur: [00:14:28] That's okay.

Matt: [00:14:28] So yeah, that's a big thing for me this year is regimenting everything, so I get everything done. Because I am creating content with three hats here people. Help me out! Share some of this stuff. I'm doing the best I can. Mur and I are giving you everything we've got. She's got puppy care to pay for.

Mur: [00:14:48] That's right. And they could have taken care of both toenails under one sedation the first time around, but they didn't. So we've got to pay for the sedation, and we get to pay for the follow up. That sucked, man.

Matt: [00:14:59] That's kinda messed up. You feel like they'd give you a discount. That sort of it sounds like a their fault kind of thing. I just throw that out there. When these things happen, you need to call Nikki. Because Nikki would have harangued them until they gave her a discount.

Mur: [00:15:15] I'm not good at haranguing.

Matt: [00:15:16] She's amazing at it. Well she's a lawyer, first of all. Second of all, she was raised by a salesman. So she avoids paying retail ever. But some of the arguments I've seen this woman have in consumer situations. It's really stunning. I wish I could compose a highlight reel of her negotiating with clerks. But anyway, that is all good stuff. I'm glad the puppy is okay. You're nominated for a big ass award. You have another very interesting things going on too, I don't know if you're ready to talk about them yet, but-

Mur: [00:15:50] I will hopefully, weather permitting, be at ConFusion this weekend. And I've decided I will attend Norwescon, which is where they're giving out the Philip K. Dick Award. So if you're going to that in Seattle at the end of March, I'll see you there. I do have one project that we've gone forward another step where my pitch was approved. Now I'm writing an outline, and I still can't say what it is.

Matt: [00:16:11] I know what it is, though, because I'm special, and I'm very excited. It's very exciting. You're going to be excited when you hear about it everybody. But I just

wanted to throw that out there. I just wanted to tease a little bit. So yeah, that's all the stuff that's going on. That's all the old business, Mur, and that's the theme of our first episode of the year here, is handling old business.

Mur: [00:16:36] That's right, we're ... Actually, that's not the end of the old business, that's the beginning of the old business, because I've got a whole page of old business in front of me.

Matt: [00:16:43] Oh no, I meant that was like our old business. We've brought everybody up to date on our old business, and now we ... I wasn't ending the episode, Mur.

Mur: [00:17:02] I didn't think you were.

Matt: [00:17:04] No, I'm just saying. That was me segueing into your page of old business.

Mur: [00:17:04] Yes.

Matt: [00:17:05] Yes. So, that's what we're doing. Anyway, that's what we're doing in this episode, is we're handling old ... I just realized we've gotten fairly into it, and hadn't expressed what we were doing. So that's all I was going for.

Mur: [00:17:12] A decade of friendship, and podcasting together for three-ish years, and we still are not very good with the segues, man.

Matt: [00:17:18] No, but that's-

Mur: [00:17:18] What's up with that?

Mur: [00:17:21] That's our shtick though. That's what we do. We're bad at segues. It's charming. We could lose that. That's integral to our identity and our dynamic. We can't lose being bad ... if we got at good segues, the show would become awful.

Mur: [00:17:38] I don't think you're right.

Matt: [00:17:40] I do. I feel like a good 25 percent of the good stuff on the show is us being bad at segues and trying to work our way through it.

Mur: [00:17:47] And flailing around?

Matt: [00:17:48] And flailing around. It's like Kermit the Frog. If he didn't have flailing, what would he have? The banjo. That's it. And a lot of people play the banjo. Steve Martin plays the banjo.

Mur: [00:17:58] Yeah. Andy from The Office plays the banjo.

Matt: [00:18:04] Andy from The Office plays the banjo, yeah, I'm saying, so if he only ... and all you have is a banjo, you're only half Kermit the Frog.

Mur: [00:18:17] I don't even know where you're going with that.

Matt: [00:18:21] I don't know, but I'm just glad that's-

Mur: [00:18:25] I don't know where you came from. I don't know any of it.

Matt: [00:18:28] I'm glad that's a sentence that exists in the world now because I said it. Anyway, would we like ... should we get to your long page of continuing old business?

Mur: [00:18:31] Yes. Old business.

Matt: [00:18:36] Move the thrust of the show along.

Mur: [00:18:38] I have to apologize to Allie Wade. Because Allie asked a question in June about contracts, and we said we're going to get somebody on to talk about contracts, and we still have yet to do so.

Matt: [00:18:47] Well we have planned to do that.

Mur: [00:18:48] Yes, yes. We want to get our agents on to talk about all that stuff that we are not qualified to talk about. So Allie, it's in the plan, I promise.

Matt: [00:18:59] It is literally last week, we got together, we had a big show summit, and that was one of the items, Allie, so we will be getting to it this year, hopefully in the early part.

Mur: [00:19:09] Yes.

Matt: [00:19:10] I blame Mur.

Mur: [00:19:12] One thing we need ... that we haven't ... it's not a question, but we need to put this on the website. I'm having website problems. We need to figure that out, but that's another thing. Cameron drew us Morgan Freeman's compound back in October and sent me a PDF of it. We need to put Morgan Freeman's compound by Cameron on our site somewhere.

Matt: [00:19:35] We absolutely need to do that.

Mur: [00:19:37] That's just me reminding myself, and when Matt gets me the show notes, that'll be another reminder.

Matt: [00:19:42] It's a work of art. You put a lot of time into figuring out where everything would go. I can't believe anybody would do that. But I'm flattered by it. It's an amazing thing. We'll definitely get it up on the website. When we have a sense of website permanency.

Mur: [00:19:58] Aaron writes: *I've got a question about not giving away work for free. I'm self published, not well-known. I concluded my last book needs more exposure. I went to review sites and one site said they didn't really do reviews, but I was welcome to write a guest post of original content as a way to promote my book. So I took a small piece of my book, repackaged it with some new material and they posted it. Only after I submitted did I think of you guys and not giving away material for free. But as a new author, I have almost no exposure so other alternatives like paying for advertising seem*

even more counterproductive than spending my time. Does it change anything if the free piece funnels directly to something that does earn me money?

Mur: [00:21:04] So, here's the deal, Aaron. The whole “don't work for free” thing is essentially, do not give work to someone else who will use it to make money for themselves and for their benefit. It's kind of hard to take that rule into the Internet Age, because we do a lot of stuff for free. We do this podcast for free. This is us giving stuff away, but we're doing it to build an audience, and let you guys know that we do more than just the podcast, and you know if you ... you can consider that a marketing expense. Your time and effort there was a marketing expense. I don't think there's anything wrong with that. Matt, do you agree or disagree?

Matt: [00:21:42] No, I think you drew the line very well there between what constitutes working for free and what constitutes promoting your work, which is just, no one else should be profiting from work that you are not profiting from. And I mean monetarily there, because there are all kinds of ways to profit. And I think that's where it gets muddy with the internet. I think you're still able to draw pretty clear lines, even on the Internet. Either you're making money from something or you're not. You know, that's true even on the internet. So yeah, that should be your guideline for things like that, which is, no one else should be making money off of your work when you are not making money off of it yourself. But as far as using samples to promote your work, one of the things you should have on your website as a writer trying to sell stuff is samples of your work to whet people's appetite for more of it. But the only thing I would add to make very clear is when it comes to that kind of thing, it should always be you building your platform. That's all I would add is make sure it's you with a platform that you own, whether it's a website or your blog or your podcasts. And it's you giving that stuff away if you're going to choose to do it. Don't do it for other people on their platform. And Mur, you can feel free to disagree with this if you want, and I know people argue, what if they have a really big platform, isn't it worth it then? I am really starting to hardline on this stuff.

Matt: [00:23:10] I don't think it is. I honestly, I really don't. I think the value that you end up receiving for putting your work, even on a larger platform with someone else's, is counterproductive to the value in building your own platform for yourself in the same way. It's harder. it takes longer. I know there is an appeal in seeing your work on

something that you attach value to you as a large platform. But I really believe there is more long term value in you using that work to build your own platform than there is having it on someone else's site. That's my personal philosophy that I operate from. One of the reasons I do that, honestly, is because we live in ... we work in an industry where people are so exploitive of writers, I feel like you have to hardline on that. You can't be loose with it anymore because too many people take advantage of it. And also, you're just perpetuating people being able to take advantage of it. It's detrimental to everyone else when you do that, let alone yourself. So that's how I feel. Other people have varying viewpoints on it. Other people aren't as militant about it as me, but I have come to a place where I'm so sick of seeing the exploitation of our industry, I hardline on stuff like that. I really feel like blanket, no, don't give free stuff to other people. That's where I come from on that.

Mur: [00:24:28] Yeah. There are a couple of shades of grey. None of the authors who contributed to the Star Wars anthology *From a Certain Point of View* made any money because that was an anthology for charity. They were donating what we made to the charity that the book was supporting, only we just didn't have to say ... we didn't receive the money and just give it back, we just didn't receive the money in the first place. But, that was still definitely worth it because it was for charity and that is exposure that exists.

Matt: [00:25:05] It does, that's ... and I'll absolutely add that caveat, but that falls under the rule that it's not a for profit thing. You do have to make money, and some of that money has to go to the operating costs of running the thing, so people are going to see money from it. But, when it's a charity thing, absolutely, I will totally make it clear that that's a caveat to the rule.

Mur: [00:25:25] And that's it for the e-mails. We don't have a lot. Either we're not getting a lot of feedback, or people have discovered that we only do a feedback show every three months or so and they don't want to wait.

Matt: [00:25:36] Oh, I choose to believe that we get to stuff with fair rapidity, so we've kept the backlog pretty low. I choose to believe we're just too damn efficient, Mur. But we do have some Twitter questions that we also need to address. So it's good, we'll start with a fresh slate after the old business episode. That's really the point of the old business episode. So, [@TheFaldor](#) (and I just like that, TheFaldor), "What's a good

daily word goal?" I believe it to be more than 1 and less than 11,000.

Mur: [00:26:18] This is a very personal question. I think consistency is important. So whatever you can consistently do is a good word goal. The pro author Cory Doctorow tries to write 250 words a day. And he writes 250 words a day. That's a very small goal, but he's doing it. And he writes books.

Matt: [00:26:47] And he's a busy guy. I think that's definitely a case by case basis kind of question. I absolutely agree with you, Mur. I think consistency is the issue. It's like playing blackjack, which I do, I'm a blackjack fan. Many people have many thoughts on the rules and the methods and practices of playing blackjack. Personally, I don't care how other people choose to play their hand as long as they do it consistently, as long as they make the same choice every time and don't constantly shake things up, because I feel like that creates chaos. And I would apply that to your daily word goal, too. It should be a consistent thing that you can hit every day no matter what. And then if you exceed that, then you're a big winner. That's like getting blackjack at blackjack. I chose this blackjack analogy, and I'm sticking with it. I know it's not great. I'm aware of that as I'm saying it, but I committed to it and again, consistency is important. I would also add, honestly, at the end of the day, the most important thing to me, in terms of consistency, isn't even establishing a set word count and either hitting it or exceeding it. It's just that you choose to write every day and you write every day. Whatever you're able to get done. Especially if you're someone who's very busy. You got a job, you got family and a couple of kids, you got a stamp collecting hobby that you don't want to give up. As long as you write something on a daily basis, I feel like you're doing okay for yourself.

Mur: [00:28:09] Do people still collect stamps?

Matt: [00:28:13] Yeah, I mean, stamps are still a thing. I get packages all the time. So I would assume as long as stamps are a thing, stamp collecting will be a thing. When stamps stop being a thing, I feel like stamp collecting will be even more of a thing because they'll be even more rare.

Mur: [00:28:29] Ohhhh, I see.

Matt: [00:28:32] You understand how collecting works, right, Mur?

Mur: [00:28:33] Fuck you. The next question.

Matt: [00:28:38] Oh yes, sorry. So, thank you @TheFaldor for that question. I just wanted to say your twitter name again. It's here somewhere. I went on an epic rant on Twitter earlier, so I got a lot of people talking about that, but I know I have another question.

Matt: [00:28:55] That's me playing filler. Okay, Stacia Rogan ([@WordsByStacia](#)). I like that a lot. You know, she's been following me for a while, and I never noticed her Twitter name. @WordsByStacia, I like that a lot. Or Stacia. If I'm mispronouncing your name, I apologize. "How do you feel about 'reading fees?' As a writer, I'm not sure about paying someone to read my work. But the readers need to be paid for their work." That's a good question. I like that question. Mur, your thoughts on readers and reading fees.

Mur: [00:29:31] I think that it depends on what you want out of it. If you want a beta reader to say, "You know, you're going in the right direction. You're not going in the right direction. I don't get what's going on here." Usually, that's something that a friend or a very excited reader will do for free. If you want to know if you are using a marginalized person in the right way ... marginalized character in a respectful and right way, then hiring a sensitivity reader is important. We have a previous show on that I recommend going back to, because sensitivity reading is not an easy thing to do because you're actively looking for things that will upset you or people like you. That's not an emotionally easy thing to do. It is also time. And if you're asking for an edit, that you should pay for. But I don't think people really pay their beta readers

Matt: [00:30:39] I mean it depends on what you define as beta reading, but generally a beta reader is someone you know who is happy to do it for you. Like my wife is my beta reader. But then my agent is my beta reader and while technically he makes money, I don't pay him to read stuff. Even in that professional context. Yeah, but it's really, it's kind of semantics but not really. Beta readers should be, I think, a more personal thing. Sensitivity editors, absolutely agree with Mur. Definitely go back and listen to our episode with Elsa about that. There are authors who offer manuscript doctoring, which is something I've done in the past to make ends meet. That I don't think that is a waste of time. I think that's something that can be valuable to you. But that like anything, like a

sensitivity editor or a beta reader, the important thing is just vetting and making sure that you're going with someone dependable. And in the case of an author who is a manuscript doctor, I'd want to go with someone whose work you have read and whose work you have enjoyed and whose work you see as being comparable to yours, either in the presentation, in the professionalism of it, or the tones and style of it. In all those cases, it's just about vetting. I do think sensitivity editors, manuscript doctors, if you're going to self publish and you want someone to edit your manuscript for that, I also think they need to be paid. So everybody but a beta reader who is a close friend of yours, I feel like should be making money for the value they are bringing to your work.

Mur: [00:32:18] Alright.

Matt: [00:32:20] But anyway, just to reiterate because new writers, I love you, but you're ignorant as hell. Just to reiterate. Make sure you vet your readers if you're going to pay them. They need to have some value they are bringing to your manuscript. They need to be doing something that is going to bring value to your manuscript. I just want to reiterate that because it's important. That was a good question. Good questions today. Nobody I really feel the need to say mean things to, even though I don't really say mean things anymore.

Mur: [00:32:51] Not really.

Matt: [00:32:53] Occasionally, when I really get worked up, but I feel like I've calmed down a lot. Okay, so I think those are the outstanding Twitter questions, Mur. I think we've handled the old business.

Mur: [00:33:10] The old business. Now we can look forward to the new business of 2018.

Matt: [00:33:13] We can. We've got a lot of exciting things in the hopper, as the kids say. No kids say that. But no, we do. We are going to get that contract episode we talked about, we are talking about a lot of other very groovy guests that we're going to have on.

Matt: [00:33:30] We've received some very cool suggestions for episodes and topics and guests from a lot of you out there. And if you sent us one of those, we saw it, and we're going to try to get to it as we can. But yeah, I think 2018 is going to be a good year for Ditch Diggers, Mur.

Mur: [00:33:50] I think it is too.

Matt: [00:33:51] In many ways, for us personally and for the podcast. Should we start Hugo shilling? Is it too early?

Mur: [00:33:54] I think they're probably going to open up the nominations any time. So, yes. It should be soon.

Matt: [00:34:02] So yeah, we'd like to win a Hugo this year. So if you're a Hugo voter ... We really need to complete the trilogy, because the story of us and the Hugo, it could be a very awesome trilogy if we win a Hugo this year. Because the first year we were in contention, it was the whole puppies thing. So that was a whole catastrophe. But even if you had taken the puppies out of there, we would have been one spot away from making the ballot, and we didn't make the ballot that year. So it was a dramatic, but ultimately crushing, almost. Then last year, we made the ballot. We made it onto the ballot. It was a [crosstalk 00:34:47]-

Mur: [00:34:48] We did. It was very exciting.

Matt: [00:34:48] ... the last year, we were nominees. We were up against Team Jeopardy and a bunch of other really groovy podcasts.

Mur: [00:34:56] We got pens. We got chocolate with the Hugo on it. I still haven't eaten mine. I don't know what to do with it. I don't know what to do with collectible chocolate.

Mat: [00:35:08] Everybody's keeping it in the refrigerator. Mine lasted about a week. I'll be honest with you. I'm a sugar fiend, and we've been dieting, so that was a whole ... I'm not even going to get into that right now. But we did get-

Mur: [00:35:15] You got to get it out of the house, the best way.

Matt: [00:35:16] We did get non-edible pens and I do still have the pen. Yeah, Mur, it was in Finland. I couldn't go. Mur went. I followed along from home. We lost to Team Jeopardy, but we were in contentions for it last year. So this year, if we won, that would just be a perfect symmetry and a perfect trilogy to the story of almost making the ballot, making the ballot but not winning, and then finally getting our Hugo. So if you want to tell a fantastic story at the Hugos this year, folks, Ditch Diggers is the story. I'm sorry. I'll put that out there, I'll put it up against anybody. We need to be the story at the Hugos. So support us in our endeavor to do that. Help us create a moment. Let's make a fucking moment, people. Right, Mur?

Mur: [00:35:55] I'm pretty sure the Battle Hymn of the Republic just started playing in the background.

Matt: [00:35:58] It should. It absolutely should. I should look out the window and see people in uniform playing band instruments.

Mur: [00:36:08] Or gathering. Gathering to support you. Gathering to be part of your army, your Hugo army.

Matt: [00:36:11] Rallying, raising banners, raising arms. No arms, there's not gonna be ... no violence. I don't want violence. But raising banners, ready to march. So that, listen, I can't come up with a pitch better than that for anything. If that doesn't sway you folks, I don't know what what will. And I'll never be able to recreate that. I was on a [inaudible]. We'll just have to keep-

Mur: [00:36:37] You were on fire, man.

Matt: [00:36:40] I was. We'll have to cut that out, and then splice into future episodes or re-shill for the award. So yeah, we are Hugo eligible, and we'd like to complete the trilogy this year, so please consider us. Don't worry, I'll remind you in future episodes.

Mur: [00:36:55] Can I talk about a couple other things that I would like to get Hugo attention?

Matt: [00:37:00] Absolutely! Please do.

Mur: [00:37:05] I don't know if she would accept the nomination, but Ursula Vernon's acceptance speech about whalefall was one of the highlights of the Hugo ceremony last year.

Matt: [00:37:18] It absolutely was. It was one of the highlights of the year period.

Mur: [00:37:21] If you want to read it, [Barnes & Noble](#), the blog, re-posted it. They posted it in its entirety. So, Ursula won a Hugo and got up there and started talking about what happens when a whale dies and sinks to the bottom of the ocean, has absolutely nothing to do with her story, her award, or who she had to thank. She just wanted to get up on stage and talk about dead whales, so that's what she did.

Matt: [00:37:49] And it was amazing.

Mur: [00:37:46] Yes. For your short ... either short or long form dramatic stuff, consider *The Good Place* on NBC, which is the philosophical afterlife comedy that just continues to blow my mind. It is brilliant writing. The acting is wonderful. It's painfully hysterical. Have you watched it, Matt?

Matt: [00:38:09] Well, you know what was really cool about that, honestly, again, you all were in Finland, and I was not, when that was going down, so I was following you from home. The only thing I could get to work to follow the Hugos, other than tweets, was, to follow the Hugos ceremony, was the closed captioning. So I was reading texts of everything being said at the Hugos. So I got to experience Ursula's speech via slow text reveal on my screen. Which, I would argue, was actually as good, if not better, than hearing it live because it really was like, "But instead I'd like to talk about dot dot dot." Wait for it. "Whalefall." It was amazing. I followed along and read and I couldn't believe this is a real thing. I thought the feed had been hacked for a minute. So it was, yes, it was an amazing experience. I would absolutely support it for its own Hugo award. Again, I don't know if Ursula would accept it, honestly, but it's certainly worthy.

Mur: [00:39:15] Yes. But I was talking about *The Good Place* after that.

Matt: [00:39:17] Oh, yeah. The Good Place, yes. Oh I thought you meant the ... Okay, well I misunderstood. Yeah, The Good Place is really good.

Mur: [00:39:25] Yeah, just to give you an idea of the surreal humor it has. There's one guy who's described as literally the dumbest person I've ever met. He says he used to be part of a breakdance crew and whenever they would have tryouts, they would judge people on a scale of 1 - 13, 8 being the highest because the numbers go up and then down like a tent. So 8 is the peak of the tent, so 8 is the highest of a scale of 1 - 13.

Matt: [00:40:00] Makes sense geometrically, certainly.

Mur: [00:40:04] Consider that as your either long form for all of Season 1, because it was pretty brilliant, or one of the episodes near the end of Season 1 as short form.

Matt: [00:40:22] I agree. I just hope we can get somebody to accept it if it won.

Mur: [00:40:31] Yes, well it's going to be near Hollywood.

Matt: [00:40:32] I hope ... I know, I know, it's just always so sad when they do the movies and the TV shows, and no one even sends a reply. It always bums me out. That was what was so good about *The Martian* year, because they had the astronauts. Because he was an actual ... So yeah, that felt like a thing. But most years it's whoever goes up is, "I'll accept this award for this Hollywood person who has never heard of this award and doesn't give a crap." So, I would like to see somebody from ... it would just be a nice move if somebody from The Good Place if they won if they came down and accepted it. But I totally agree about the content.

Mur: [00:41:10] I want to make a comment about [clipping.](#), because they put out a five minute long, another sort of afro-futurist song. I think it's called The Deep, I think. I will tell Matt what it is when we're done and he'll put it in the show notes, but they put out another really awesome afro-futurist song, and I just like seeing other media than Game of Thrones, and The Expanse, and stuff get nominated for this. I want it to [crosstalk 00:41:52] a little bit. Look for other things. Look who's pushing the envelope and clipping. are pushing the envelope, so-

Matt: [00:41:54] And clipping. will actually be there. I'll just throw that out, too.

Mur: [00:42:02] Yeah, they would show up. They showed up in Finland, so-

Matt: [00:42:02] Again, that's not the reason. It's what Mur said, they're doing really, I don't wanna say unusual, but very original, innovative work and they actually deserve recognition for that. But I just also think, the fact that they participate in the community, and in the award, also speaks very highly of them, and a lot of other people who get excluded from those awards, who would actually show up to claim it. But I totally agree, Mur. I think the awards should be looking for more of that type of media and more of those types of creators out there to honor, because they absolutely deserve it

Mur: [00:42:34] And one of the most hardworking fan writers, who never ever promotes himself, would be [Alasdair Stuart](#). Caveat: he's a friend of mine, a friend of Matt's, but he's still one of the smartest writers, but he never promotes himself, and so we need to do it for him. So, consider Alasdair Stuart. If you want to know about his writing, then listen to [PseudoPod](#). He does the intros and outros, and his intros and outros are pretty extensive and really brilliant.

Matt: [00:43:05] I completely agree. He's been one of the best in the game for a while now, he just lets himself be too well kept a secret. I will tell you this right now, and I've said this before, if I sold a pilot for a TV show that went into production, Al is one of the guys I would hire for the staff right away. I think that highly of him and his writing, and his amazing storytelling brain, and I can't give a more ringing endorsement for that. Go read any of his stuff, you'll see.

Mur: [00:43:45] He's also been writing for [tor.com](#) now.

Matt: [00:43:48] Yeah, he's doing great stuff.

Mur: [00:43:50] You probably will have run across some of his stuff.

Matt: [00:43:52] I'll totally throw my whole hardy ... whole hardy? Wholehearted endorsement behind ... whole hardy. WHOLE HARDY! That's my pirate name, Mur. Captain Whole Hardy. You've been taken-

Mur: [00:43:58] I'm proud of you, man.

Matt: [00:43:59] You've been taken prisoner by Captain Whole Hardy. I'll throw my wholehearted endorsement behind AI for a Hugo every year.

Mur: [00:44:01] Yeah. Is there anybody else you think needs attention that would not get it otherwise, besides you and me, in non-fiction?

Matt: [00:44:09] Right. I did not come prepared to talk about this, but I will offer my suggestions next episode when we talk about the Hugos. Because again, we're going to talk more about the Hugos.

Mur: [00:44:18] Yes. Yes, we are.

Matt: [00:44:21] I will come loaded for bear next time, but I think those are good for this episode. Those are some excellent choices.

Mur: [00:44:28] Excellent. All right, well, shilling time. I have a book called *Six Wakes* out. It is a Philip K. Dick nominated novel now, and it is a space murder mystery. It's been out for almost a year but people are still buying it. Which is cool. And I have a book called *I Should Be Writing* out if you would like a writing workshop in a book. It's a very attractive book, and it was a lot of fun to write, so-

Matt: [00:44:58] It's a book you can write in.

Mur: [00:45:02] ... people seem to like it. I have [Escape Pod](#) which is the short fiction podcast that I co-edit with Divya Breed. My website is murverse.com and my email address is mightymur@gmail.com. My Twitter is [@mightymur](#), but I don't know how active I'm going to be in the next couple of weeks because I think I need a go-away-from-social-media-focus-on-fiction kind of mindset. Go ahead, Matt.

Matt: [00:45:21] My latest book is *Gluttony Bay*. It just came out in November. It's the penultimate book in my Sin du Jour series, which concludes in April of this year with *Taste of Wrath*, the seventh and final book. If you want to go back and get caught up on

the whole thing, if you're new to Sin du Jour, the first book was *Envy of Angels*. Start with that. Read them all. They're novellas, so they're time and energy effective. But I'm very ... I'm extremely proud of the series. I'm extremely proud to be concluding it with Tor.com Publishing with *Taste of Wrath* in April. I hope as many people as possible will get caught up before the last book comes out, so you can have that final book coming out experience that the rest of us are really going to enjoy.

Matt: [00:46:04] My other novella currently out is *Rencor: Life in Grudge City*. It's the first in my lucha buddy cop supernatural comedy action series about lucha libre, which is Mexican wrestling to the uninitiated. That's from Parts Unknown Publishing. It's available on Amazon and print and e-book form. And of course, the new thing is Angry Writer, my [YouTube channel](#). I do a vlog every day of the week. I try to make them very good. I try to tell stories and tell hard truths. There is a cartoon pig that's our mascot, which is Hamshackle Pig that people seem to be enjoying. So come subscribe to Angry Writer on YouTube and check out the vlog. I also do a bunch of other cool things like unboxings and writing tutorials. My wife Nikki is a regular guest of the channel. We're having a lot of fun over on Angry Writer. Come check it out if you're of a mind to. I'm good, Mur.

Mur: [00:46:51] All right, well I'll see you next week Matt.

Matt: [00:46:55] Next week.

Mur: [00:47:00] Like in a while, but next week.

Matt: [00:47:01] No, next week. Same Mur time. Same Mattchannel [*sic*]. Oh, I just made that up. Come on.

Mur: [00:47:05] Whatever.

Matt: [00:47:06] Come on! Happy 2018 everybody.

Mur: [00:47:11] Yeah, Happy New Year.

Matt: [00:47:11] We'll see you next time.

Mur: [00:47:10] You can support us at patreon.com/mightymur.

Theme Song: [00:47:18] Ditch Diggers! Theme Song by Devo Spice. devospice.com

Gail: [00:47:34] I'm Gail Carriger, and I travel a lot. Or I thought I did, until I met Piper, who travels more than I do. We are both super travel dorks, so we thought, let's get together and talk about travel hacks, tips, tricks, and horror stories. Check us out on [20 Minute Delay](#): a new podcast about travel.

Mur: [00:47:49] All I have is a sharpie to make my notes, so I've got big, fat purple numbers.

Matt: [00:47:52] You know, number obesity is a problem, Mur, you shouldn't make light of it.

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