

The Language of Hope with Guest Alasdair Stuart

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SPEAKERS

Mur Lafferty
Alasdair Stuart

Mur 0:35

This is I Should be Writing season 17 episode eight, and I know that because I checked it a couple of times. I called number five number six. I might have called number seven number six, or number eight. I think I called seven, eight, I was all over the place. This is my attempt to actually get standardized. Still bumpy, but I am so excited. I have with me one of my best friends Alasdair Stewart who is a fiction writer, nonfiction writer, game writer, three time Hugo nominee. Did I get that right?

Alasdair 1:06
Two

Mur 1:07

Two. Well, you've been nominated for the nonfiction twice and then once as one of our major hopes for escape pod.

Alasdair 1:15

That's right. Three times it is. I stand corrected.

Mur 1:16

Got it. Yep. You stand corrected. All right. So, Alasdair and I talk frequently and he's often a very good anchor for me in troubled times. You know, I'm like the little toy running around and Alisdair is one that picks me up and like puts me down and I run in the correct direction after that. So, when we were talking about I should be writing for the new year, we were talking about, as I've mentioned in previous episodes, how language can be weaponized and that's no

fun. And it's kind of scary. And what Alasdair said was, he was suggesting we take, he was suggesting we take the idea of hope and what we're doing as media people to make it a better time with language. So, let's say hi to people in chat. Hey Kaykimmie, Fyrerider, Robhines, Tish Bouvier, Friggsdaughter, Steve. Did I get everybody? I think I did. Thank you everybody for being patient and telling me what's going on. Alasdair you're getting like personal with the mic here.

Alasdair 2:28

No I'm just getting a little stiff.

Mur 2:29

Oh I'm sorry. I'm trying to move your, your windows so we can see a little bit more. That's wrong. That's way wrong. Here we go. We can see a little bit better. Okay. Hey, Todd. Good to see you. Glad you could make it. So Alasdair, why don't you tell us, whatever you can and what you're working on now just for a little good promotion and then we can start talking about language.

Alasdair 2:53

Yeah, of course. I have two or three things on at the moment one of them, like I say is The Full Lid, the weekly pop culture newsletter which is for free and goes live tomorrow at 5pm. That's a quite a lot of my focus. I'm on Escape Pod with you and Divia once a month. At the moment, mostly doing Flashback Fridays, but I've got a couple of new, new stories coming up as well and I'm kind of working on building those and concept two. I'm on pseudopod three of the next four weeks. And we've got some incredible stories there's, there's one read by Autumn Ivy, who is just this incredible voiceover artist and power lifter and motivational speaker. And it is one of the best stories I've ever heard. I'm really looking forward to seeing that here. So that's all going on. I'm also part of the psue- ongoing pseudopod partnership with Tor Nightfire, where we're providing nonfiction for their website. And I've got three, three things in various stages of completion that. The first, my first one went live, which was about Magnus Archives, the horror podcast audio drama. And the next two are about Midnight Metering the cult classic Clive Barker movie, which is so much weirder than anyone thought it should be. And the History of the Other Man in Black, because I say, Man in Black to folks in the US and entirely justifiably, you can either randofly, Johnny Cash.

Mur 4:24

Randofly, that would be a hell of a duo.

Alasdair 4:28

Wouldn't it. Oh, it's the right age. You say Man in Black to the right age of horror fan, in this country, and they think of these precise sonoros footsteps coming up in the basement of BBC broadcasting house. And this deep voice man going, "Good evening. This week's tale comes to us." And it's basically, it was the BBC audio version of The Twilight Zone. It predated it. Actually began in 1949. And there's been four or five iterations of it, and it is basically the thing I've riffed off my entire podcasting professional career. It's. Hello, I'm jovial and slightly sinister. Here's a story where some horrible things happen. Sleep well. I've written like a primer for that, which was, was really really good fun. And the last thing I'm going to do before I step across

the novel is a couple of pieces for a really good and criminally overlooked service called The Companion, which does incredible deep dives on classic SF shows. I had the privilege of writing up an interview they did with the visual effects supervisor for Stargate SG one a couple of months ago. And that's why I know that the official technical term for the Stargate opening is kawoosh, and how in later seasons that was renamed the kaching because it costs too much. But they're about how the house delegate command is in many ways the protostar fleet, perhaps proto United Federation of Planets. A piece about how John Creighton and Farscape uses popular culture as armor and as a means of navigation to get him through this, just sanity annihilating situation that he's in. And something else about how the evolution of how the Russians presented in SG one tells you an awful lot about the evolution of that particular element of the Cold War. Also there are jokes.

Mur 6:28

Also there are jokes. Wow.

Alasdair 6:30

Yes.

Mur 6:30

You got a lot of stuff going on man. Thank you for taking the time to come here and hang out with us.

Alasdair 6:38

Thanks for having me on dude, anytime.

Mur 6:40

Yeah, Hello Anne. Hello, Urbanbohemian. Good to see you. Love that, Urbanbohemian says I do love that about sci fi worlds where sci fi actually exists.

Alasdair 6:53

Yes.

Mur 6:54

So it's, I've been despondent about the state of the world even with new administration over here we still have all the problems. And all the people that supported those problems, they're still around, they're just not in as much power and that sometimes, sometimes people get galvanized and want to fight. Me, I just get very sad. And I'm not a very good fighter.

Alasdair 7:18

Understandable

Mur 7:19

But, in talking to you about all this crap you did mention about the language of hope in what we do and so you know I can't, I am you know people say, oh well you should run for office I can't argue with my dog. Okay, I am not an arguer, I can't. And so, but I, but what I can do is tell stories, and so it really made me feel better when you pointed out that there are other ways to

resist and fight, and so I wanted to bring you on to talk about the use of language and the use of storytelling and trying to get us out of this mire.

Alasdair 8:05

I'm actually really glad that you mentioned the dogs because that is one of my first really big points. I would, I give the chat fair warning quite a lot of this is going to touch on politics, and in particular how politics uses language. I don't think we're going to be coming up with anything offensive. But we are going to be going to places which I think everyone on the planet is quite glad we have stopped going to for the last four years and I promise we won't stay there very long. Like most folks, I've watched the inauguration. And like most folks I had a very strong emotional response to it, which was basically somewhere between, like cry-laughing in the woods, oh thank God it's over. Just over and over again.

Mur 8:46

Yeah.

Alasdair 8:47

But the thing which really really struck me was dogs. Because there was a clip that someone dug up from 45 about I think on the initial election trail. And it's actually him going, "Can you see me with a dog?" and be playing it for laughs in the audience. I know we can't because you're incapable of human emotion. And,

Mur 9:12

yeah,

Alasdair 9:13

Compare that to the situation that we're in now where there are two dogs in the White House. Not only that but one of them is a rescue dog who had on the same day as his owner was sworn in, an indoguration ceremony.

Mur 9:28

Oh, the pun hurts.

Alasdair 9:30

which was held at the rescue center because he's apparently the first rescue dog in white, in the White House, to honor both him and the other dogs which he kind of grew up with around. And on the one hand, that's adorable. On the other, there's, you know the pun is with all by itself. It's actually a much, much deeper point than that. Which is, this is an indicator of a shift in focus and we'll see as we go on that this is also a shift in language, away from: this is all about me, this is all about what I want and I'm right all the time and if you're wrong you're a hater and a loser and you suck. To: this is the most important job in the world, but this is my dog. And that was one of the, the two things that really hit me about the integration. The other one was, was the introduction. I didn't catch the person who did it. but they kind of said "Hello, welcome to everybody, the people we have on stage today. And over here under this cloud we have Mitch McConnell. Over here we have the Obamas, we have a whole bunch of Biden's." And the informality, the corners being knocked off so much of the language. Really knocked

me for six because for the last four years, we've had a leader of the free world whose default mode is scowl and yell. And that dictates-

Mur 10:49
And name calling.

Alasdair 10:50
And name calling.

Mur 10:52
Name calling.

Alasdair 10:52
And that dictates two really important and really terrifying things and the first one, I hate this as much I'm sure as a lot of other people do. But the American presidency is the leader of the Western world, and an awful lot of cultural texts come from him or her soon.

Mur 11:06
Hopefully.

Alasdair 11:07
And the linguistic choices they make. And also, there is they set, they set -to borrow one of my favorite lines from the yard, they set the tone. And the tone has been belligerent and terrifying for four years because that's the thing you have to focus on anytime you look at someone who uses language, the way 45 did. It's not just that he's angry and confrontational it's that he's absolutely terrified to his bones. And the second you step away from that, you see an incredible shift. And it was in a lot of cases, it was like a light switch being flipped between how the two administrations communicate. And I mean the inauguration is a perfect example. I mean, Trump wouldn't understand whimsy if we tried to sell him Benadryl. You know, it just, it makes no sense to him, it's just not something that exists. So the inauguration is just not something which would ever work. But you look at something like that and then you look at the fact the inside, I think six hours of the administration handing over, the sign in form on the White House website went from: what's your gender: he/him, she/herm to he/him, she/her, they/them, nb, would rather not say, and I believe, ace. This is where we get to the crux of it. We get to the crux of language is a means of communicating hope because that shift is a door is a door being opened

Mur 12:38
Mhm.

Alasdair 12:39
that had been slammed that shift says, 'No, you're welcome and valid, please talk to us', not 'You're a man or a woman and if you're neither of those you can leave'. And this is the other really interesting thing that comes from this situation and ultimately, a very positive one, which is like I say, language and tone flows from the head and the head shifted the language and tone is floating in a very different than I think far more hopeful direction. And I mean I'm, I am

far from unaware of Biden's flaws. John Oliver referred to him as the shoot them- shoot them in the leg candidate, and I think that is far and away the best description I've heard, although Charlie Brooker's amiable Civil War ghosts Joseph Biden comes quite close.

Mur 13:29

Wow.

Alasdair 13:30

Yes.

Mur 13:31

I had not heard that it. Did, but you know during the election cycle, I was just, I just kept thinking of the quote from the office where Stanley says, I would sooner work for an upturn-upturned mop with a bucket for a head. And that's kind of how I felt it's like okay I didn't vote for him in the primaries I want somebody else but I'd rather have him or a broken vacuum cleaner or, you know, a piece of hot dog that you drew a face on with a marker and nobody wanted to eat you know all of this will be better than Trump. So, yeah, sorry, there's my little bit of aside, but carry on.

Alasdair 14:08

It's been fascinating to see that in lockstep with the cultural change which black lives matter has absolutely cemented. Which is that suddenly a lot more people are a lot more aware of how, for want of a better word the phrase: your mileage may vary. People's experiences are very different, depending on who they are, who they are and in many cases what they look like, and for a very long time popular culture in particular has genericized that. And one of the things, because I mean, this is something I touched on in the Full Lid that one of the things I do is analyze popular culture, and it is the most interesting time in recent history to do exactly that. Because one of the most influential pieces of popular culture is American series TV drama. And that is going through three, I would argue separate seismic changes at the moment. The first is we are out of the era of president 45. The second is we are in the middle of a COVID pandemic. And the third is we are immediately post phase one of Black Lives Matter, I would argue, not well I mean we'll start with that one in particular. I grew up on cop shows. My first conscious memory of a TV serial drama was Homicide Life on the Street, which is an incredible piece of TV, that I would kinda heartily recommend everybody track down, but it's grim as hell. And it also directly addresses, not quite enough in hindsight, the inherent racism in an awful lot of law enforcement. And you can see that the shift in that whole element of pop culture, hit and hit very, very hard. Already the Brooklyn-99 writers room, talks about how they had a good chunk of season 9 written, and they realized it just wouldn't work.

Mur 16:04

Yeah, I heard about that. I was gonna bring that up. They, you know, they've, they've touched on a variety of things of-of police issues before now. I remember in one episode where Terry is not in uniform and he stopped by a white police officer and the-the white police officer once he found out Terry was a cop apologized, because he didn't know Terry was a cop and Terry's like there's something else going on here. Do you not see it? And he could not get the guy to realize that him stopping him just for being a black man was problematic. And so they, yeah.

Alasdair 16:42

If I remember the kicker in that is initially Holt backs the white cop too.

Mur 16:47

Oh, I don't remember that. Damn.

Alasdair 16:49

Yeah Holt basically goes no this this was, I could see why he would do this, and the B plot is basically Terry talking this man who he admires more than anyone else in the world round and Holt realizing that this is directly analogous to his experiences as a gay police officer. But yeah, Brooklyn-99 has been seismically altered by this kind of stuff. I mean, the were only half joking comments about Brooklyn-99 season 8, they're teachers now. You know? Just one line like, Hey, Charles, how are you getting on with being a unicorn? Fine how are you getting on with being a knight? Well, you know.

Mur 17:33

I would watch that cast in anything. They're-they're excellent characters but-

Alasdair 17:38

I think I would too, to be honest. But you're starting to see that all over. I mean, I'm, my partner is in the next room so will not be able to go and actually mock me for this. I am a fan of what more than likely be called garbage for television. I am very fond of the 911 franchise which is basically about emergency responders, living in versions of Los Angeles and Texas built on hell mouths. There is a subplot in an early season three episode, a subplot involving a meteorite.

Mur 18:13

A subplot.

Alasdair 18:15

That hits a lady and blows a hole in her chest, and she lives. Yes.

Mur 18:20

Wow.

Alasdair 18:20

Um, but these are, these shows are soap operas in uniform a lot of the time, but they're also at the bleeding edge of cultural interaction and response because they kind of have to be. And it's been really interesting seeing how they have slowly, actually not even not slowly, begun to adapt on the new seasons of shows like 911, and the rookie. Everyone's wearing masks. The rookie in particular has had a real long dark night of the soul moment, and has needed to, where they have they've actually brought community leaders in to discuss upcoming plotlines and advise on them as I understand it, because they want to reflect the difficulties of policing in Los Angeles, from every possible angle. Swat for God's sake, which is basically a show where

every week Shemar Moore is a GI Joe attached to a different vehicle while some makes pew-pew noises. And I love Swat. I'm really fond of it but it's not bright.

Mur 19:20

I'm all for pew-pew noises, you know.

Alasdair 19:24

Swat's done the exact same thing. Swat's starting to look into the difficulties of cross cultural policing and whether it can be done in the way that it currently is. And I mean, that one, you want to circle back around to the central concept we're looking at of hope. That's where I have the most hope because that is a TV show, like I say, which is all about the massive militarization and fetishization of military hardware and US law enforcement. And if they can do the 'hey this is bad, you guys' then anyone can.

Mur 19:56

Yeah. So as writers, whether we're amateurs or not, how would you suggest we try to inject hope without, you know, if it's too blatant you know someone's going to say, you know, you're just trying to do a fairy tale about today or virtue signaling which I'm pretty sure I don't understand the meaning of but it's always used by people who are really rude and racist and sexist so whenever I hear the term virtue signaling I'm pretty much thinking, 'No, you're a jerk'. So, but-but you know-you-you can do a lot of people, I mean, I also did not mention Alistair wears a bunch of hats. And one of the hats he wears is the owner of Escape Artist. I've put your information in the chat. But Escape Artist runs Escape Pod which is the sci fi magazine that I'm co editor on with SB Divya, pseudopod, podcastle, and cast of wonders and so on top of everything else he does he's our boss, in that realm. So you know we talk to you about some of the stories we get. We get a lot of stories that touch on current events, kind of clumsily. And so it's hard. Not necessarily saying people should comment on current events but things are changing in the deeper gestalt I guess, of our mindset and the way we're telling stories so if an amateur is thinking, I feel-I feel strongly about this. I don't want to just do a parable with a moral. How would I inject the hope into what I'm working on?

Alasdair 21:42

I can give you a couple of examples which might be of use. One of them is because, my understanding, correct me if I'm wrong, is this is more of a storm on this side of the Atlantic than the other because for some reason. There's-there's something in British culture which really really hates trans folks, and I have a suspicion it's-it's to do with panto culture, and how the idea-the idea of a person who is biologically a man dressed like a woman has been held up for something grotesque or absurd to be laughed at. But I don't have the research for that and I also don't have the anthropology degree for that so if anyone in the comments does, you're welcome. But yeah, my understanding is that things for trans folks are a slightly more hospitable on your side of the Atlantic than ours. And there's a lovely example of a piece of kind of entirely character face writing book which tells you everything about the world, and the characters in the most recent season of Star Trek Discovery. And I'll keep this very spoiler free as much as possible because it's a great show. And this doesn't speak to the overall plot too much but it is part of it, where there's a new character who initially identifies as female. And two of the, the engineering team are looking after her because she's fallen asleep. And one of

them puts his jacket over her shoulders and she wakes up and they talk a little bit. And it's obvious-becomes obvious that she's been awake for a little bit, for a little while and actually overheard them referring to her as her. She says 'oh just one more thing. It's they/them now.' And they go, cool. Okay. And she's like, 'All right. Night gents' and leaves. And that's it. And your perception of that type of writing is really going to vary depending on how much of a problem you have with people who don't share your pronoun, I suspect. I love it. I think just very kind of honest, open, 'these are my pronouns now' type approaches is a really good way of showing a world which is more accepting all too often is.

Mur 23:52

Yeah, and I have a theory about that scene. Um, we'd heard there was gonna be a trans character and we were very excited. And then, when the character showed up and everyone was using she/her pronouns, we were disappointed. Because that we, we just felt like that was not I mean, yes some trans people want to be called she/her but I think it didn't fit with what we were hoping for in that you may have to struggle with your pronouns. And you, and that's on you, and, but then I think that scene where they had to point it out. And it not be a big thing but just, hey, here's how to talk about me. It's, I think that scene was important and, in hindsight, I'm happy that they did it that way, because the, you know, the engineers had the same perception, as the audience did and the engineers had to be told as the audience now does what the pronouns are supposed to be for them.

Alasdair 24:57

Exactly. And it's, it's one of those places where drama can kind of bridge the gap a little bit between cultural movement and individual. And where, you know, really good drama or really good fiction and, more importantly, you know, try this instead. And it works. I'm trying to think of other recent interesting examples of that. I mean, in pop culture, the most interesting one is Dr. Who, which, very gently, increased the temperature of the bathwater, so that the people who wouldn't have a problem, who wouldn't be okay with a female doctor, were as the small scale not okay as they possibly could be.

Mur 25:38

You're so diplomatic. It's awesome.

Alasdair 25:41

Four, I think like four or five years, passing references to tiny modules occasionally a woman turns into the introduction of Missy, who's the master but in this incarnation is female, turns into the 13th doctor and there are still people going, 'I'll never watch again!'. Yeah, sure, okay. But again, that's an interesting one because it's such a cultural icon in the UK. And because they've been so careful about it, it's taken three years with, with the excellent female doctor we currently have, for them to be in a position where she might get a girlfriend.

Mur 26:14

Whoa!

Alasdair 26:16

I know, right, and, on the one hand, you're like, Why is it taking so long and I absolutely get that point of view but on the other hand I always try and focus on well we're here now. So let's see what we can do with it.

Mur 26:28

Yeah. I'm gonna turn to the chat real quick because there's been a discussion about virtue signaling in chat. Ceit says I always wonder how people who claim others are virtue signaling can tell between it and having actual virtues. Yeah, sometimes people just say like, something nice or something supportive of a group that they're not in and immediately someone says virtue signaling. I'm like, no, I think those people deserve fairness and rights and stuff.

Alasdair 26:56

I just think these people are neat. Leave me alone.

Mur 26:59

Theoceaninmotion. Welcome, I haven't said hello to you yet. The action or practice of publicly expressing opinions or sentiments intended to demonstrate one's good character or the moral correctness of one's position on a particular issue. Oh, so it's like, um waiting till the barista is looking at you to put \$1 in the jar.

Alasdair 27:17

Yes.

Mur 27:18

Okay. And we have a new follower, Catwoodandcatlow, I believe, welcome. Longtime listener to the podcast so really glad you're here. The only time I think it's warranted to say someone is virtue signaling as a bad thing is if they're provably hypocritical about what they're signaling about. You lefties hate America. Well I storm the capital and call for the former VP's lynching. And maybe when people bring up their woke stuff, apropos of nothing but don't actually go to protests or help out at all. Oh like in Get Out when you know there's the, the, oh I would have voted for Obama a third time kind of thing, I see.

Alasdair 27:18

Bradley Whitford. I honestly think no character actor on earth is having more fun than he is right now.

Mur 28:07

What is he working on now?

Alasdair 28:08

Oh, all kinds of stuff.

Mur 28:10

Oh okay.

Alasdair 28:11

He did that. He is, and they have openly admitted this is the live action version of Rick from Rick and Morty. He's playing the live action version of Rick in the Godzilla movies.

Mur 28:21
Oh wow.

Alasdair 28:23
And he's the reason why I have a piece of duct tape on my tea mug which has 'Not yours', written across it.

Mur 28:32
I'm sure your partner loves that.

Alasdair 28:35
She wrote it for me.

Mur 28:36
Oh fair.

Alasdair 28:38
He's apparently had great fun in two or three seasons of The Handmaid's Tale.

Mur 28:44
Okay, let's see, we've got, let's see, Underpoppe is here. Hey Underpoppe, good to see you. Underpoppe says headcanon for me is that Yaz and 13 get together.

Alasdair 28:56
My hope is that that's gonna be canon-canon.

Mur 29:00
And Underpoppe missed the discussion on virtue signaling. We didn't talk about it a whole lot, but we're talking about how to inject a semblance of hope, into your stories, without being accused, without well somebody's gonna accuse you of something all the time. It's gonna happen. I was doing a talk at a library once and a guy's like, how come you don't have any male protagonists. And I'm like, well, I do, first. Actually I do and that story is going to be told, on Alasdair's stream on Wednesday nights. I don't know when you're starting it but that is called Marco and the-

Alasdair 29:36
Last night.

Mur 29:36
Last night? Oh man, I should have tuned in, I'm sorry. I was recovering from a migraine but, yeah, I'm gonna shout out, you guys again. But if you want to hear my story as told by Alasdair, Marco And The Red Granny, check out EA podcast. Yes. Oh, Underpoppe says I'm working on

that in my own writing so this is a great topic for me. Yeah, I wrote that a while ago Fyrrerider. It's still something I'm pretty happy with.

Alasdair 30:04

Marco's great. It's already really enjoying revisiting it.

Mur 30:08

Oh good, thank you. It's kind of scary looking back on stuff you've written before. And like you can see maybe this, the work you did that led to where you are now but you can also see all the beginner mistakes and so I have not actually revisited Marco in a long time.

Alasdair 30:29

Margarita actually spotted something really cool about it last night. You wrote this so long ago we are both thanked separately.

Mur 30:41

Wow. Wow, how, how long have you guys been together?

Alasdair 30:47

We're coming up on 10 years.

Mur 30:49

Okay. That's awesome. That's very funny. Well, yeah, thank you both.

Alasdair 30:58

You're welcome. Thank you.

Mur 31:02

Hope in language and writing makes me think of Rebecca Solnit in her books Hope in the Dark and Our Paradise Built in Hell especially says Kaykimmy. I haven't seen those. Are those poetry? Are they like the ones that-that the books that I've seen to be surprised that target selling poetry. Target didn't sell Solo, but they're selling poetry. I'm not putting poetry down. I'm just whining that solo was not held at the level of the other Star Wars books and I probably shouldn't be comparing it to poetry because that does sound like I'm putting poetry down, and I shouldn't be. Nonfiction. Okay, so I'm just comparing it to poetry that I don't remember the name of. But, anyway, I will check out those books, Kaykimmie. Thank you. I'll write those down. I did find it in one target, but not my local one, which felt like a slap in the face man. Come on. What?

Alasdair 31:55

is sopia Weekly, what my book. Ma'am, this is a Denny's.

Mur 32:03

its, they had Rise of Skywalker. And they're carrying a lot of the standalones. They just didn't want Solo.

Alasdair 32:15

Okay Mur? Two things. Firstly, both your book and the movie that it adapted, run rings around Rise of Skywalker. And secondly, yeah I've been really mad about it too.

Mur 32:29

If they didn't have other Star Wars books, it would have been fine. But anyway,

Alasdair 32:34

You walk in the book section and go, 'Oh come on'.

Mur 32:38

I totally haven't ever done that in a book section of Target. Never. No, never. Not me.

Alasdair 32:46

Because that would be understandable and fine.

Mur 32:51

Yeah, there's a book section at Target Tod. Kaykimmie says hope in the dark is a collection of essays. Paradise is a novel about humanity coming together during major disasters, that's interesting. So here's a question and this, I'm not sure this is on topic but I just like talking to Alasdair so I'm going to ask it. So you've got these, you have someone you look up to. A writer whose work has affected you and possibly you try not to copy but you know that their work is so intricate to your soul that you know it's gonna bleed out. Like-like Douglas Adams for me. I did not even realize that Shamblin' Guide to New York City was clearly Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. Not pastiche, it was better than that but still it was like I did not catch the parallels until it was about out on the shelves and I went, oh probably should have thanked Douglas Adams or something. But, um, but have you ever had that person talk about books that they love that you think are snooze fests, or otherwise terrible.

Alasdair 33:55

That's a really interesting one.

Mur 33:57

I'm just gonna point out where I'm coming from because I'm sorry, talking about, oh somebody's talking Oh, right. The novel about humanity coming together during major disasters. I bought a book on Audible that was, I can't it might have been the, I don't think it was the road. The road's that mainstream one. I can't remember, but it was another post apocalyptic, man wandering around in the bad part. But it was, it had a new foreword by Connie Willis, who is one of my favorite all-time authors, and one of the nicest people in the world. And I was so excited I'm just like if Connie endorses it I'm there. And I thought it was partly boring and partly offensive for, because of it, it was a product of its time kind of thing and I'm like, why, why, if, if I like what she writes, and she gets inspiration from this person, why can't I leapfrog and, I don't know.

Alasdair 35:01

Oh no, no, I get it. I've kind of had that. I really liked the Martian, the Andy Weir book. Despite having a very strange first interaction with it. I think it was the first major convention I've ever gone to. And I ended up sharing a lift with, down to breakfast one morning with my roommate. And one of the editors in charge of the book who introduced himself as, 'Hi I'm editor so and so from so and so. We just bought the Martian by Andy Weir. Ridley Scott's gonna be directing it.' And I was like, this was literally his opening conversation at 7am in the morning. So, my first response was very nearly, 'Hi my name is Alasdair. I haven't visited the bathroom yet today'. I really liked that and I really liked the fundamental humanity at the core of it. And then I read an interview with Weir around the time that Artemis came out, and the entire thing was just so, so 'what do you read?' 'I read Powell Anderson and Isaac Asimov.' 'Who else?' 'The other white guy authors of science fiction, all of them, love 'em, cant get enough.' 'Okay. Who'd you read from, you know, this century?' 'No one really. I like rockets.' I'm like, oh Andrew.

Mur 36:21

Oh, yeah.

Alasdair 36:22

But at the same time, I just, I skipped his second one because likable, schlubby rocket scientist poured into an unconvincing 18 year old teenage Muslim girl on the moon didn't seem like a recipe for success to me. And it really is his third one at the moment, which is, it's very, it's very good fun. I'm going to give another 50 pages but this could comfortably be a Martain sequel. You know, you could rewrite this into the movie with-with, you know, Mark Watney waking up a partial shatter capsule going aw not again. This should not be that hard. So, yeah that's that's pretty analogous to it, you can, I like the work but maybe read someone who's alive.

Mur 37:10

Yeah. Yeah, when people find out, they, that I write science fiction and they say, 'Oh, I love science fiction' and I ask who you, who you read and if they ever say, you know, Asimov and Heinlein I'm just like, Okay, bye. Cuz

Alasdair 37:26

That suddenly reminds me, have you ever had the podcasters nightmare here. 'So you do a podcast?' 'Yeah.' 'Oh cool I listen to podcasts', 'which-which one?' 'Joe Rogan'.

Mur 37:41

No, I, I, Oh boy. Yeah. Looking back at chat, we got, have you ever moved your book to make it easier to see at a bookstore or target? I have not but sometimes people I'm with have and I have not unmoved it.

Alasdair 38:01

I have.

Mur 38:02

You have?

Alasdair 38:04

Um, I, I've actually signed books. I mean, check first.

Mur 38:09

Well, that's the, that's different,

Alasdair 38:10

with the staff obviously. Um, some of them some of the game stuff I did was on sale at basically every gaming convention I went to. So everyone I went to, I'd be like, I wrote about a third of that. Do you mean to sign it? Yeah all right here you go.

Mur 38:23

Yeah that's different. That's different, that's, that's different, it's you know it's like publishers pay for a lot of those spots. Sometimes I don't know if they've pay to have it facing out but they pay for end caps, and they pay more to put the books on the shelves. They so it's like the, that's why I don't do it but also I'm not that sure of myself, I don't know. The only thing they sell in supermarkets-supermarkets over here are bad crime movies and bodice ripper types. Yes. Same for my supermarket but Target usually has a larger range of books. Not much larger but a little bit larger. Underpope, Underpope misses those weird conventions at cons that you spoke of with the 'I'm Alasdair Stuart and I need to go to the bathroom'. The real Joe Rogan experience is meeting people who listen to it and immediately wanting to unmeet them. And Todd has moved mine and Matt's books to make them visible. Thank you, Todd, that's very sweet. That's awesome yeah and Matt has a book out. Matt's book came out on Tuesday, and because of pandemic I haven't been out to get a copy but I want to support my local store and support Matt so I got to go to the store and get that. Yeah, if you listen to Ditch Diggers Matt's new middle grade book is out. It's called Bump. If I had planned better I would have a button that brought up Bump, the cover and all of that. But if you search Bump Matt Wallace you'll find it.

Alasdair 39:53

And I'm 50 pages in and it is going very well.

Mur 39:56

Excellent. I think we're gonna get to the second part of this and see if people have any questions for me or Alasdair. The first part is going to be, I Should be Writing is moving a little bit from banter for an hour to try to be focused for the first half and then we'll banter for half an hour. It's different today because Alasdair is here for me to banter with, but if you're listening to this on the feed the podcast will end shortly. And if you're a Patreon supporter, it will keep going. And if you're watching live, obviously it's going to keep going. So, Alasdair you want to remind people where they can find you and all of your hats?

Alasdair 40:40

Yeah, of course. Um, the best place to go for the podcasts is escape artists dot net, and it's our course site and from there you can jump off to all four shows. For me, my website is Alasdair Stuart dot com, which is A-L-A-S-D as in Derek, maximum Derek, A-I-R S-T-U-A-R-T dot com. I'm on Twitter @alasdairstuart, spelt the same way. I'm on TikTok spelt the same way. And the Full Lid is also linkable and can be subscribed to via my website.

Mur 41:16

And if you did not understand why Alasdair is one of my best friends it's because he will put in an obscure Good Place joke in the middle of his bio and just keep going. So-

Alasdair 41:26

Maximum Derek.

Mur 41:27

That's right, maximum Derek. If you want to know about me, that's murverse.com. You can catch this show, twice a week on twitch at twitch.tv/mightymur. I've been putting it up on Youtube. I didn't do it today because I was already too flustered to begin with but I'll be pushing it there later. That's Mur Lafferty over on YouTube and Twitter is mightymur and my books are available where most books are sold. And if not you can order them. And it is Hugo time, which is one of Alasdair's and my favorite time of year but it's like Easter where you have to put on the uncomfortable suit. You have to put on the uncomfortable suit to get the jelly beans. That's kind of what it feels like to me. I don't know about you, Alistair but if you, if you are a Hugo nominate, if you are eligible to nominate for the Hugo's and that means you had a membership to the New Zealand con or a membership to this upcoming DC con, Alister is a multi nominated fan writer and he deserves it again this year, if I may say so. And I'm eligible for short fiction editor. Escape Pod that we both work on is eligible for Semi Prozone. And I have a couple of short stories out this year in Way of the Laser and the Escape Pod anthology anniversary, Escape Pod Anniversary Anthology, which I also co edited. So,

Alasdair 43:03

You know, also very deserving of awards.

Mur 43:06

Oh, thank you. Unfortunately we don't do, Hugos don't do anthologies.

Alasdair 43:15

No. Give it 15 years of the following wind.

Mur 43:19

Yeah. Theoceanimotion says you and my Easter experience seemed to be very different. I don't know if that means yours was worse or better but yeah it was often very early morning church services and very uncomfortable clothing and being cold and, you know, those are all I remember which means religion really did not work well on me. Because that's what I remember instead of the actual thing that they were trying to talk about. It was like the uncomfortable shoes and the shininess and the pretty dress but I can't play with my cousins because I'm wearing the pretty dress and that's just totally not fair. Yeah. But I got candy.

Alasdair 43:55

Yay candy!

Mur 43:55

Yes. So Alasdair thank you so much for being on I Should be Writing and thank you so much for your patience in getting here.

Alasdair 44:05

It's all good. Thanks so much for having me on, buddy.

Mur 44:08

And thank you guys for listening or subscribing, or just being around. Tell a friend. Tell a friend about Alasdair's stuff, tell a friend about my stuff and that means we'll keep getting to go. So thank you guys.

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