

I Should Be Writing S.19 Ep.9

Growing Like Jade

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[Original audio](#)

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKER

Mur Lafferty



00:02

We're gonna be talking about plants today on I should be reading season 19 Episode Nine

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hi there welcome to I should be writing. This is a podcast for wanna-be fiction writers and I am your host podcaster and author, Mur Lafferty.

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And unfortunately, I have already recorded this and lost it. This I suppose is my fault for recording on my phone.

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Although I could easily lose it on the computer too, I guess. I don't know. So I'm gonna try to remember,

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usually start with me saying what I've been up to, and giving accountability for my writing. But unfortunately, I haven't been doing a lot of writing because I was spiraling earlier this week.

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I'll talk about this more on episode 11. But I hit a point in my novella where I thought this is all wrong. This is very bad. And it's difficult to know where the line is between "this is terrible. I'm a garbage writer, and maybe I just need to step away, have a cup of coffee, go for a walk, and then I can come back and do it." And "no, wait, this is really broken. And I need to fix it."

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I think I found that spot.

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I also knew I couldn't do anything more on the book that day. So I just recorded a bunch of TikToks, which I thought was pretty good, because I've been nervous about doing that. So if you go to my TikTok page, you can see all my terrible advice as Evil Mur. You'll know she's evil because she wears a mustache.

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But speaking of lines, I have hesitated talking about my mental state right now. Because there's a fine line between letting you guys know about my mental health issues and letting you know that it's okay to get help. It's okay to take meds, and you can build a writing career while having these problems.

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And then there's the other side of I'm whining to you every time I do a podcast.

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And I don't want you to worry about me. I'm not like super deep, dark depression. This just feels like this every day grind of difficulty, not getting excitement for much. Which could also be I don't know, due to the season, but luckily, we're in March now. Now when I recorded this previously, I looked down and realized there was no waveform.

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And I panicked, and I shut it off. And I started a new file where I had left off. So now I am hoping--because I don't remember where I left off--I'm hoping that I can make the segue. Good. Long story short, I've been hoping I could get some writing done. And I'm

not. But I think I've got a way forward. And I'll talk more about that in a later show. I know this because I'm recording two shows today. And now we'll get to the other part of the episode that I recorded before this one.

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I picked up a book called Chatter, which a couple of friends encouraged me to get and I'm checking it out. It's about your inner voice. And it's got sciency bits of where it comes from and why it's there.

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But also how to reframe some of your negative thinking. And I am eagerly getting into that only, I'm only in chapter one. So we'll see how that turns out. Right before I started listening to the audiobook, I had left my keys inside and I ran into the house going "you moron." And then I went to go listen to the book that tells me how to reframe my negative thinking.

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I guess it is needed. Oh god.

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Anyway, the downward spiral is not great because I haven't been writing much. I've been making notes I've been outlining a little bit. I was trying to write a novella with...5...11 characters. I suddenly realized that was way too heavy a load for a novella, cause novellas typically go 20,000 words to 40,000 words and they're a tighter story than a novel is a novel has room for hundreds of characters. Strange that you can't do 11, And then you can go to hundreds but in a novel doesn't have a top limitation while novella does. So there's only so many characters you can put into

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average 30,000 words. And I realized that mine was too large. And I needed to step back and figure out how I could tell the same story with fewer characters.

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But refocusing my creative direction is not something I've done before but it worked that day. I didn't feel like a complete failure because I couldn't write because

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I actually did something. And I was proud of that.

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What I want to talk to you about today is metaphors for growth. I'm a big lover of self help books, writing books, productivity books.

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But a lot of times I once the book is done, and real life takes over, I forget, whatever lessons I learned, or I think “that won't fit me right now. I'll do that later.” And part of me wonders, “how am I learning anything? Because I don't feel any different.” I don't feel that I'm tackling characterization any better than I did years ago.

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I collect succulents, probably too many. Then I found out apparently, it's an over 40s, white woman thing to collect succulents, and I don't care. I will fit that stereotype because it makes me happy.

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But one thing I noticed about succulents is they grow so slowly, which is funny, because I'm an instant gratification kind of person. And the fact that I can do something for a plant that I won't see the benefits of for months seems counterintuitive. But they're very pretty, and I like to look at them.

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But then I'm also taking care of my kid's plants, because they can't take all them to school, obviously.

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And when they come home, they say, “wow, you're Jade has really grown.”

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Or “these vines are getting really long.” And I look at it and I'm thinking “they have? I thought they were just completely static the whole time.”

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And then I take a look at pictures that I sent them for the last semester and a couple of years back of one of their favorite plants. And when I first started photographing it, it was it had formed these big fat leaves. It was from a cutting and it formed these big fat leaves. But it was pretty much lying on the dirt. I mean, yes, it was rooted, but it looked like it was just sitting on the dirt. And now the thing is about four inches tall with lots and lots of different leaves. And I keep forgetting that that's the same plant. Because it grows so slowly it it grows even slower in the winter. Sometimes plants just go dormant.

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And I realized that my writing, journey, evolution, whatever you want to call it is like a succulent because it's going to grow. And people who aren't watching me right every single day, are going to read the next book and think "Oh, Mur has grown in this way." I may not have gotten better. But I know I'm evolving as a writer, because you change every time you write something new, even if it's tiny, tiny, tiny, something you can't measure. It's hard for me to say what I learned from my MFA program. I do know a couple of things. But

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like a couple of very specific lessons, but I do think I came out of it better, I just can't tell you why I realized that that kind of thing is you take advice like this, and you take the experience of writing and you internalize it. And hopefully you ended up using it even if it's subconsciously. So if I have faith that these plants really are growing, even though they look the same to me every single day, I can also have faith that my writing ability is growing.

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I hope so anyway.

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But I think um, with that in mind, and giving myself a little room to think about stuff, I will be able to restart this novella, and it probably will move faster since I don't have as many characters.

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Another mantra I've tried to kind of adopt this year is “you can only do what you can do right now.” And I know that that sounds kind of circular thinking, but I can't think about all the things I could do. I can't think about all the things I didn't do. I can only think about what can I do right now: if I'm worried about this novella, what can I do right now?

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I don't like pithy things like “hanging in there, baby,” and the inspirational posters and stuff. But I have to say that as I've gotten older, a modified non-religious version of the Serenity Prayer has become very helpful to me. Because sometimes when you look at the fate of the world, you're like, “Everything's bad and there's nothing I can do.” Well, that's the “accept the things you can't change” part.

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And then have the courage to find the things you can change. And so what can I do right now that I can actually do so that is what I'm thinking about. But I should be writing is a twice weekly podcast. I'm trying anyway. One of them is live on Twitch for free with a live audience. And one of them is recorded for free in my office, and they all go out on the podcast feed. I do another sort of writer's bar con on Twitch on Tuesdays at 3pm Eastern Time, where I we just kind of sit around and talk about writing nothing scheduled or focused. I'll just take questions. That is while it's free when it airs, that is a Patreon exclusive. The bar con is one of the things you'll get if you support via Patreon or substack. I actually have no paid subscribers for substack. But my plan is if I get any, they will receive the exclusive stuff that patreon supporters receive and they'll get it in their substance. And that's mightymur.substack.com where I put out my newsletter, The Hot Mic. I'm on Tik Tok as mightymur, Instagram as mightymur2-- stupid story with a Hotmail account that's not interesting-- That's numeral two. And I have a book out and it's called Station Eternity and it is what would happen if “Murder She Wrote” happened on “Babylon Five.” You can find out where fine books are sold. You can buy from an indie bookseller near you or you can order from my indie bookseller in Chapel Hill, Flyleaf Books and get a signed copy. But that's it for me right now because I gotta edit this thing and put it up so I can get back on a schedule where I'm releasing two a week and I can catch up. But thank you for listening. Thank you for the support. If you can't support monetarily, then spread the word. Follow me on Twitter, Mastodon, or Hive. I'm mostly posting on Mastodon these days, but I still have a Twitter presence occasionally.

Oh, and my next appearance is I'm doing a one-day appearance at PAX East, the 24th of March, where I'll be speaking on a panel called "What the Heck is Blaseball?" So if you go to PAX East, check it out. I should be writing, and so should y'all be.



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