

September Q&A Chat Transcript

Kip

Are there maybe any tips you can give on writing dialogue? Often when reading back my writings I feel kinda embarrassed because it all sounds so silly on paper. I was wondering if you have any tips to overcome that!

I'm definitely not the most qualified person around to dole out advice about dialog writing. I pretty routinely commit what many comic creators consider one of the cardinal sins of comic-making, which is to allow characters to do a hell of a lot of talking. I have a number of loquacious cast member, Rocky chief among them, and that makes for a lot of reading that quite probably detracts instead of adds to the story experience for many readers. *Nevertheless*, I have plenty to say about the topic. Maybe it'll be helpful. Here goes.

- Be an Observer - In the same way many visual artists are habitual people-watchers, become a people-listener. Try to be conscientious of the way people naturally speak to each other in candid scenarios. Compare it to the way they speak when addressing an audience or classroom, think of how situations and familiarity or unfamiliarity affect the way people talk. Pay attention to the way dialog is handled in your favorite books and movies and TV shows as well. You can gain an understanding of an array of *dos and don'ts* from fictional media in particular.

- Words Have Style - Just like the artwork in a comic or the words in a book, the accompanying dialog has a style too. You might notice that films made in the earlier half of the 20th century sound much different from modern films, and not just because of the trans-Atlantic accent. Back then, as film was in some ways considered an emergent branch of stage theater, actors spoke theatrically, enunciating and pontificating like they were on a stage, exchanging unrealistically snappy banter or delivering perfect righteous diatribes without a stutter, while everyone else in the room patiently awaited their turn to speak. Around mid-century this changed dramatically as filmmakers began focusing on writing dialog that sounded more authentic. *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) is credited as a major turning point in the way screenplay dialog was written. If you start making it a habit to pay attention, you'll probably start to notice things like this and more. And further, based on what you're picking up, you can decide what it is you're trying to achieve

yourself. Maybe you want to write something with theatrical dialogue. Maybe you want to write hardboiled monologues. Maybe it's supposed to sound like an over the top satire with exaggerated delivery. Maybe you want to write something more realistic. Understand what overall character you want to achieve with the dialog you write.

- **Informality** - Most people don't speak formally, in essay structure, avoiding contractions. We speak in a sort of linguistic shorthand, usually - sentence fragments with casually constructed grammar, mixed with a marvelous array of gestures and expressions. In daily conversation, we very rarely explain everything to each other in full or tell others exactly what we're feeling as we talk. Bear in mind that so much is unspoken but understood, much is inferred and implied, much is said with a look or a posture, so much is pantomime.

- **Let Imagery Do Its Work** - If you're making a comic or graphic novel, let the artwork shoulder as much of the burden of the communication as it can. Sometimes few or no words are required. Sometimes they'll spoil things. Same with literature -at time, descriptive narrative does a much better job expressing something than spoken word. Personally, I find it helps to envision a scene playing out like a movie in my head. I close my eyes and let it run on repeat while I make mental edits - adjustments in pose and staging, looking for places where I can smooth out the exchange, heighten tension a bit, or add some needed emotion. Think of the visual cues from characters or mood setting factors in the environment that might accompany, enhance or even replace the dialog.

- **Acting** - You have to think a lot like an actor when you're writing character interactions. Often it won't be the precise words a character uses that will sell the dialog, but the way characters deliver and react to what's being said. You've probably heard the phrase 'acting is reacting' - that concept goes a long way toward writing something that feels convincing instead of contrived. If characters act and react to what is said in ways consistent with their nature, with their motivations and with the situation at hand, you can get away with a lot. If they don't do that - if they overreact, fail to react or react in a way that feels inappropriate or out of step with their personality or their situation or the tone you've set, the audience will start to squint and balk, or even laugh.

The most extreme example I can think of here is *The Room*, Tommy Wiseau's infamous accidental uproarious comedy. Aside from the random, trite soap opera plotlines that don't seem

to adhere to each other in any way, it's the characters' nonsensical reactions to their circumstances that elicit the biggest laughs. One character announces that she has cancer in such a blaze, vaguely annoyed manner, it's laugh out loud funny. The main character, proclaims in overt hair-pulling distress over his fiance's accusations -- *"I did not hit her! I did not!"* and then cheerily follows up, within the same beat, "Oh hi, Mark!" as he notices his friend is there. It doesn't make sense. It doesn't have emotional or tonal consistency. It feels like you're watching aliens doing parody impersonations of human interactions. Most things aren't this egregiously off the mark, but still, it's those moments of disconnect between what's happening or being said and what characters are doing in reaction to it that results in that sort of painful comedy.

For another example of what I mean - a demonstration of effectively selling the dialogue with the character reactions - I would point to a couple of scenes in the movie *Mulholland Drive*. It's a Lynch film, but even if you're not into David Lynch's wacky surrealism, you can probably find these bits independently on YouTube and see the point in them. In one scene, two characters do a practice read of a film script. The lines of the script are as cheesy and stiff as can be and the characters clearly aren't buying it. You, as the watcher, will probably find the script they read from goofily unconvincing as well. In a subsequent scene, however, in the audition, the actors put a whole different twist on the lines and they manage to sell it because of the way they play off each other. The words are the same and yet they work. The trick is that the characters have to behave like they believe it, like they're really in it, like they're actually reacting to each other and their surroundings, and not just mechanically going through a series of motions as programmed by the writer. These two scenes have a whole other meaning in the context of a very strange movie, but they're also a strong example, I think, of how it's not just the dialog itself that makes or breaks a scene. So much of it is the *delivery* and everything going on around it.

- Period Slang - It's important and can add a lot of flavor to dialog, but it's probably not as important as you think. Slang for slang's sake (or jargon for jargon's sake) sounds unnatural and cloying. Unless you have some reason to go over the top with it, use it sparingly. A lot of writers trying to write period pieces fall into the trap of overdoing the idioms, slang words and quirky sayings of a given time period. Not just amateur writers, even - I see it in TV shows frequently too.

Downton Abbey would be an example of well done historical linguistics in my estimation It's woven in and feels natural to the characters without obfuscating the meaning of their words. I liked Netflix's *Haunting of Hill House* too, overall, but there's an interlude in which a character

from the 1920s appears and delivers a fairly extensive monologue. It sounds like the writers dug up some flapper slang glossaries on the internet and tried to use as many of the entries as possible, such that she comes across like a goofy caricature instead of the dreadful premonition she's presumably supposed to be. They were so focused on selling her as a character from the 1920s, it distracts from what she's actually saying.

Any generic list of historical phraseology you find online is not going to really provide the context in which it was used. That sort of thing can be woven into meaningful discourse, but it shouldn't be used to build meaningful discourse. Add to that, trying *too* hard to sound authentic sounds inauthentic.

I'd suggest writing it in a way that sounds natural to you and the patterns of speech you're familiar with foremost, then go back over it and look for words or turns of phrase that might be anachronistic, or look for places where you could naturally substitute in something more indicative of/appropriate to the time period.

- **Big Words** - Similar to slang, large, obsolete, esoteric, obscure words can be a lot of fun, but they should be used sparingly. There are exceptions, but generally, if you're just using them because they exist or to show off, that's probably not a good enough reason - it's not a good reason to muddle the communication or to make readers pause repeatedly and pull out a dictionary. They lose the immersion that way. (I'm guilty of doing this in places, for sure. I blame it on Rocky's nature, but...I am fully willing to admit that mistakes have been made. Hehe.)

- **Edit** - Once you've written a scene containing a substantial amount of dialog, step away from it for a bit, then return to it and analyze it for unnecessary or distracting verbiage. Do a rewrite to pare it down and clarify the meaning. Then do it again if necessary. If you have a saintly friend, ask them to read it and point out anything that doesn't quite make sense or that seems awkwardly worded. If you've been working on something for a while, it skews your perception - a fresh perspective is a great thing to have at hand.

NonNewtonian Says - Reading your dialogue backward - last line back to the first - is one method you can use to see if the conversation effectively and smoothly builds toward the point.

- **Dare to Be Stupid** - There's nothing wrong with letting something be a little absurd. Absurdity is part of what makes life interesting. It's relatable, even, because life *is* absurd, and life is where art comes from.

Any time I start taking my work too seriously, I take stock of what I'm doing. Yes, the story has some serious moments, but it's also a comic featuring bug eyed cat characters who traffic alcohol and make a lot of stupid faces while they shoot at each other. Embrace the silliness a little. It's okay. There's nothing more genuine, I think, than acknowledging the ridiculousness of something, but forging onward anyway.

And if you're still feeling bad and shy about your dialog writing, hell, look at Twilight or 50 Shades or any Star Wars film made in the past 20 years. I mean, obviously, those writers did something right in the marketability department, but if you're putting earnest effort into writing dialog, you're probably doing as well or better than that stuff managed. If nothing else, it's evidence that it's a mix of ingredients that makes something resonate. You will make mistakes, You will probably write some things that are unintentionally funny, but your labor of love project probably won't live or die on the basis of a few accidentally corny, silly-sounding lines alone.

Wheaty

Tracy, you've had many unique and memorable experiences thanks to Lackadaisy. Are there any that are especially memorable for you? Or an event that you've attended because of Lackadaisy later influencing something you've done in the comic?

Oh, sure. I got the chance to travel to Italy and later to Australia because of the comic. I've been to many conventions in the US too, and I've met many excellent people I otherwise would never have met. I don't think I've made any specific story changes based on my encounters, but in a general way, I guess you could say that some of those encounters have carried me through difficult times. There have been many moments of near insurmountable self-doubt and occasions on which I nearly gave in and gave up on comic-making, but in those moments I'd eventually get to thinking back on a time when someone said my work had helped to inspire them to start their own comic, or when someone told me that reading my mini-comics helped to get *them* through a tough time. Those things have nudged me forward out of the mire when I was despairing and thought I couldn't do it anymore. It's a bit circular I suppose.

As a creator of some kind, you're maybe not aware that while you're happily doing your thing, you're sowing the seeds of something that'll later save you when you're not so happily trying and failing to do your thing.

Norville Rogers

Have you ever watched Doctor Who? (I don't know what to ask and I'm watching it with roommates right now)

Not really, regrettably. I've seen bits and pieces of the newer series, like some of the infamous Weeping Angels episodes, but I've not watched consistently. I like David Tennant as an actor. I suspect I'd enjoy those seasons if I get around to watching it at some point.

Kip

I was wondering what some of the most valuable art related advice you ever received was.

I think it's largely been the higher level, conceptual things imparted by people I admire - realizations about doing art and being an artist in general as opposed to specific advice about technique - that helped me the most or that altered my perspective in some fundamental way. Here are a few that come to mind:

-- That becoming an artist is reliant on perhaps 1% "natural talent" or proclivity and 99% elbow grease, endurance and discipline. It's important to learn to enjoy the process of creating art, the work itself, as much or more than the sense of accomplishment or the acclaim or recognition that comes when you complete something. That last part is fleeting.

-- That you won't feel inspired all the time. Inspiration is usually a passing thing. It's fickle. It comes and goes. Usually it's not there in great abundance, and that's normal. If sometimes you feel creatively bereft, you're not broken. It doesn't make you less of an artist. That happens to everyone. Still, if you want art to be your career, you can't just sit around waiting for inspiration to alight upon you from heavens above in order to get things done. Write down your ideas when they come, keep a reserve. Carry a sketchbook with you, keep it by your bedside at night. Fill your root cellar with inspiration preserves in mason jars for when you need it.

-- That all art is borrowing in a sense. You can find the idea summed up in the little mini treatise that floated around online some years back called 'How to Steal like an Artist'.

It's not so much an instructional as an explanation for how we learn, how our styles and techniques and subject matter are a piecemeal of what we've been exposed to and have taken an interest in. Everything is derivative, and that's okay...or, more than okay, it's necessarily. Art cannot be produced in a vacuum. It's reaffirming of the sort of shared inspiration we work with, and perhaps reassuring to up and coming artists that they haven't done something wrong by imitating what they like. It's the particular combination of things that you learned (often by imitating) that makes your work unique unto you.

-- In conjunction with the above, the notion that your style is generally not something you must deliberately arrive at. It's more descriptive of what you do than prescriptive as something you concertededly seek to achieve. At some point I heard it said your personal style is the culmination of all of your quirks and the things you do 'wrong', and to me that has the ring of truth. If you're trying too hard to perfect every aspect of what you do to better align with convention, you end up with something more generic than what you started out with. You can accidentally refine all of the personality out of the work. So I guess the point of that, mostly, is to say relax. You don't need to frantically, urgently seek out a defining style. You likely already have one. Figure out what already sets you apart and embrace it.

-- As for technique advice...probably the old flip-the-canvas trick. When you're drawing faces in particular, flipping your image horizontally helps a great deal in spotting errors in the alignment of features that your brain otherwise auto-corrects for. Sometimes you'll draw a face that's quite skewed at one angle or another, but you won't be able to see the problem unless you flip the image.

5 Pyr

Hello Tracy you blessed being, are their any other comic creators that you look up to yourself. Also I reccommend checking out risingsand.glass if you haven't already. Oh, and cheers for everything you've done and continue to do, especially related to

Lackadaisy.

Thanks!

Yeah, there are many artists I follow and admire - almost too many to name. I'll go ahead and agree with you that Rising Sand is amazing and, if you have any interest in comics or graphic novels at all, it's worth checking out. I believe they've currently got everything from their first book up online. Here are a few others:

Unsounded - Ashley Cope

Tiger, Tiger - Petra Nordlund

Mare Internum - Der-shing Helmer

Rigsby WI - S. E. Case

Beyond the Western Deep - Alex Kain and Rachel Bennett

Kill 6 Billion Demons - Abbadon

Back Comic - KC Green and Anthony Clark

Scurry - Mac Smith

Amulet and the Flight Anthologies and Daisy Cutter by Kazu Kibuishi - a prolific powerhouse of a graphic novel creator

Bea-The-Cat123

What are the Lackadaisy cast's methods of surviving the zombie apocalypse?

Mitzi'd invite the zombies in. Maybe it'd at least **look** like the speakeasy was a hot, popular venue again. Anyone staggering around after imbibing Captain Kehoe's cargo is probably largely indistinguishable from a zombie anyway.

Ivy might find it suitable if the zombies retain their motor skills. If they can manage to sway back and forth on the dancefloor, that'd suffice. Otherwise the whole thing would put a severe and inconvenient dent in the dating pool.

Zib's approach would be to spend more time napping. Maybe power napping...with power narcotics...

Mordecai would probably make for the nearest unpopulated island (which wouldn't be very near, being as he's in Missouri).

I don't think he'd be able to tolerate things getting that corpsy...all that disease and decomposition.

Serafine and Nico would make the best of it. I think they'd just have as much destructive fun as they could, for however long they could. Wreak havoc and eventually go out in a blaze of glory.

Wick could probably pretty effectively hole up in his mansion for a while. He could just pass the time playing with an elaborate model train set and sipping scotch while zombies clamour at the window panes and Lacy frantically hammers more boards into place.

And Viktor could maybe pull off the survivalist lifestyle pretty well. If it'd be anything like living in a bunker or a foxhole, he's done it before.

Rocky - good grief - I don't know. Maybe he'd finally have a captive audience for his poetry recitals.

How're your cats doing?

They're good. They're living their cat lives and doing cat things, like barfing on the floor near my bed so that I step into it immediately upon waking up.

Is there anywhere in the world you haven't been to that you'd like to go to? (Is that correct English?)

Yeah, so many places. I hope someday I can travel to China, South America, Africa. I've been wanting to see Ireland for a long time. I've been to England, but not to Ireland yet. Lately I've been a little obsessed with the idea of visiting some of the big national parks here on my home turf too...Yellowstone or Arches National Park, maybe.

Lackadaisy cast, based on Good Omens: who's the Angels and who's the Demons?

Haha..well, I reckon most of them would be demons. I don't know. Wick and Lacy might fit in the angel crowd. Wick is a little wibbly wobbly on the moral front, though. Nina and Abelard could be a couple of ornery angels...or perhaps the Witchfinders General (Witchfinder Generals?). Conceivably, Zib is an angel in disguise...very much in disguise...so much in disguise, even he forgot.

Bella

To be a realist, When will the relationship of Ivy and Calvin end? Or will the relationship be toxic?

Well, as to whether or not it'll end or be toxic, I probably shouldn't answer directly. It'd be spoiler territory. I will say, though, that they both have a lot of growing up yet to do. I suppose it remains to be seen if Ivy's going to smarten up before she gets herself in too deep. And Calvin is in a world of trouble already. He's on a very destructive path that's not especially conducive to maintaining healthy relationships. It's going to take some doing - some major life events, maybe - to right that ship before he could really settle into something emotionally healthy.

Also how are your cats? Is maya a precious bean as always?

She is. She's sweet with me, and she'll still ride around on my back/shoulder if I let her. She's a bratty little bully bean with the other cats, though. She'll get into a huff if she sees something out the window she doesn't like (neighborhood ferals, mostly), then she'll go try and pick a fight with one of my other cats, even though they have nothing to do with it. It's feline emotional transference or something. The problem is she's tinier than the other cats, so she ends up running to me when she can't finish what she started. She'll come sprinting over with her tail puffed, and jump in my lap, hide behind my legs or crouch on my laptop keyboard to shield herself with the display screen. I love her.

Kawaii Desu Predsu-kun

Hello, Tracy! Unfortunately I will not be able to join this chat due to time zone differences, but I just wanted to firstly, again, thank you for bringing us all together, and secondly ask if you had any sources for studying lighting and how it effects different shapes, because I think you do it very well!

Thanks very much! It's a difficult topic to give a spoken response to. I can't really effectively describe in words alone how to work with light and shadow. There are a lot of great resources in the form of tutorials, books and video guides, however.

Proko's YouTube channel - Stan Prokopenko - is one place you might look for a good primer, specifically the video titled Shading Light and Form - Basics.

There's a book on Amazon called Light, Shade and Shadow by E.L. Koller available for under \$5 if you buy the kindle version.

There are tons of things both basic and highly specific on Gumroad too, usually available for a couple of dollars, if you search "lighting".

This is also a topic that's on my list for future tutorials. I hope in the future I'll be able to answer this more thoroughly with a visual guide.

Noxxia

Hi Tracy! Your comic and art is one of my biggest inspirations but as someone who went from drawing snap comics when i was younger, growing up has made me a little apprehensive and not as confident when it comes to wanting to start a webcomic of my own. Would you have any advice or pointers on jyst getting over that hurdle, maybe about planning and how you go about outlining your story? Always been fascinated with other's processes and things.

I'm not a prolific writer like some with 4 books and a trilogy under their belt - I haven't done this multiple times, and there's a lot I don't know about writing as a craft. I've been working mostly on the same project for an extended duration, so that's the only perspective I can bring here.

'Advice' might not be the best way to frame what I'm about to say, but I can talk about some things I've learned and how I go about it, though.

To start...make sure you've got a Big enough idea, one that can sustain a long form story AND can manage to hold your interest because if you really follow through, it's liable to be years of work.

If you are a bit over the moon with it and you find yourself conjuring ideas in excitement for a sustained period, it's a good indication you'll have enough material to work with.

As for those ideas - write that stuff down. All of it that you can, no matter how silly or outlandish it might seem. That's really where you start - furiously scribbling notes and doodles. A lot of it, or most of it, will end up being weeded out and discarded or re-jiggered to better fit an emerging context, but that's okay. It's much better to have an overabundance of ideas to start with than a dearth of them.

The rough edges of a story may start to coagulate in these stages, and that's probably a good time to make a more sober appraisal of what you've got. I rewrote a lot of my notes (which I had initially jotted down in pencil and collected in a disorganized heap of copy paper) into a word document and started sorting it out, clustering some things together and setting aside others. I marked things I was unsure of in gray text and I wrote a lot of questions in there for myself, marked in blue, to remind me where I needed to make important connections. I wrote down a synopsis character arc for each one I had figured out at that point to see how it might guide my decision making in arranging events. Some writers like to use notecards and corkboards at this stage, whether tangible or digital. Use whatever works best for you.

At this point, basically, you've got the partial, disconnected anatomy of a story. Maybe you know what the conflict is, and you know how you want it to end. Maybe you know exactly how you want to introduce a couple of the major characters, and you have a strong mental image of some things that happen in the middle, but those pieces are just kind of detached from each other, floating out in space. It's an inchoate, sketchy puzzle...but something's brewing. It's the partial framework and a few lumps of substance you can build around and within.

And then comes the next part - probably the hardest part - which is making those disparate

pieces fit and flow together. Maybe some of it will manifest like magic in your mind's eye and you'll start out with a strong sense of logistics. Other parts will be much murkier. They need to be puzzled out, and it's going to require some mental toil. For me, this is the vexing stuff I'm thinking about when I'm lying in bed trying to fall asleep or standing in the shower until the hot water runs out, or staring off into space, or taking a long meandering walk. For the film/television cliché, it's the writer sitting in his garret or office, bouncing a tennis ball off the wall. It's easy to give up at this stage when the ideas aren't coming as breezily as the beginning parts did, when you were in the 'honeymoon' phase with your idea. It's frustrating. You'll doubt yourself because ideas now have to be conjured with concentration - they'll feel more forced, more contrived. **But**, if you keep at it, you'll have these sporadic fleeting moments of clarity - the breakthroughs that'll save you. Suddenly something clicks and you have the jigsaw pieces you needed to connect some major plot points. And now, though you still have a ways to go to put the rest together, you are reinvigorated, reassured that you can do it...the solutions will come if you put in the work. Plotting it out in outline form, filling in blanks when you can, will help you get a sense of the scope of things and the progression of events too.

I'll follow up by saying there's no right or wrong way to approach it. A lot of new writers maybe shy away from proceeding because they feel like their methods are somehow invalid or unprofessional. You may not be following the technique of some of your favorite authors, but that doesn't mean you're doing it wrong. Ultimately, you have to do what works for you - what feels natural and best facilitates your ability to produce content. If you're getting stuff done, your method is legit.

Probably a lot of new writers think, for instance, that every professional has everything laid out like a meticulous blueprint before they begin typing pages - that they have their themes and underlying allegories and overarching metaphors and such all figured out ahead of time. That's mostly untrue. Often you can't even see what themes you're dealing with until you're in the crux of things. There are these little latent threads, heretofore unconsciously woven in, and you have these "A HA" moments now and then when you realize they're there - then you can start teasing them out of the broader fabric of your body of work. Some (or a lot) of it just comes about organically like that. To steal a George RR Martin analogy, you can be an architect and do it in a very structured pre-planned way, or you can be more of a gardener tending to ideas and seeing what they blossom into. Or you can be a bit of both.

Anyway, it's all a very daunting thing to try to approach it in full. Take it a piece at a time. Be patient with yourself, but don't get stuck in that rut of dilly-dallying forever either, writing tertiary cosmological lore that doesn't really factor in and planning unnecessarily detailed genealogical trees for every character. It all adds up to a procrastination tactic if you're doing that sort of thing instead of building the body of the story. Outline what you can and keep poking at it. If you've got some part of story fleshed out pretty well, start drawing some experimental pages to see what format and layout approach might work best for you. Immerse yourself in the work while that enthusiasm for it is still running hot in your veins. Make it a habit to work on it, so that when enthusiasm wanes a bit at times, you are still comfortable sitting down to do the work.

Bea-The-Cat123

Would any of the Lackadaisy cast be actually able to get into Area 51?

I figure Rocky can just Naruto-run right in there. What could go wrong?

Digipup

Easy question! Do you ever make appearances at conventions? If so, which ones? (I'd love to get my Lackadaisy volumes signed sometime)

I do. I've done San Diego Comic-con and Wondercon a number of times, Wizard World in Chicago and Philadelphia, Midwest Furfest, an anime con here in St. Louis, another fur con in Detroit. I've done NYCC and Rose City with Webtoon and a couple of overseas conventions, like Lucca Comics and Games...

I declined to do any this year, though. They can be very rewarding experiences, but they're very distracting too. Even though they're only 3-4 days, it's tightly packed and eventful, you have to be ON the whole time in a social way while also producing artwork - it can really kill your productivity and momentum on other things you're trying to get done, especially if you're more of an introvert by nature. And then if you're doing a Guest of Honor spot somewhere, it's a whole lot of work just leading up to the convention - if you're an artist, chances are good they're

inviting you so they can have you do the badges, the con book cover, the t-shirt design, at least a couple of panels, and whatever other art needs and wants they might have.

It's a lot. I wish it was easier to just zoom in and out to conventions and fit a bunch of them into a season, but it's just not that simple. Some artists manage to do that. I don't know how. I envy them. I'm like a one to two convention a year type of gal, maximum.

Anyway, for the next convention I do plan to be at, I'll let the Discord know ahead of time. I'd be very happy to be able to sign your books!

Beepcrank

Not comic related question: What kind of games do you enjoy playing? Be them videogames, board games, RPGS, or even sport like activities like soccer or tennis, what's the game that you're happy to set some time aside to do. If you haven't been able to play anything in a while, What are some games you'd be interested in trying. (Unrelated note I really like your cover work for Urban Jungle)

Unfortunately, I don't do as much gaming these days as I'd like.

The last PC game I actually spent any time on was West of Loathing, by the makers of Kingdom of Loathing. I hadn't played anything in a while when I grabbed that off Steam, but I'm glad I tried it. It's probably the funniest damn thing I've ever played.

Um, the Sinking City is something I'd probably enjoy if I had the time for it.

I really would love to sink my teeth into Red Dead Redemption 2, but I don't have a console and I don't know if it'll ever come out for PC.

There's a sequel to Layers of Fear that came out not too long ago that I'd probably like. The upcoming Last of Us sequel is of some interest too - I'll likely settle for queuing up a Let's Play so I can half-watch it while I try to get some work done.

There's an upcoming Junji Ito themed little indie game called World of Horror that looks interesting to me too. There's no shortage of things on my list, really, but I haven't even played Night in the Woods yet, which is ridiculous.

For sports, I was involved in skiing, horseback riding and martial arts as a kid. I was never one for team sports. Kind of a loner, I guess. These days, I run a few times a week and I hike. I'm actually starting to run short on hiking places in Missouri and Illinois that I haven't been to yet. When I take a full day off work, it's usually to go on a daytrip to hike state parks and to see natural geological features.

Boardgame-wise, this past year, I've been getting together with some of my former coworkers a couple of Thursday nights out of each month for game night. I've really enjoyed playing things like Pandemic Legacy, the Betrayal (at House on Haunted Hill) Legacy game, Tokaido, the Captain is Dead, Captain Sonar, Dead of Winter...I'm looking forward to trying Gloomhaven and Too Many Bones. Looks like we might start up a D&D campaign this winter too...which is something I haven't done since I was 14 or 15. I'm looking forward to it. It's important to have some delineation like that between work-life and life-life.

koffee

Do any of the characters have like, odd "favorite/lucky" quirks to them? like how rocky has a lucky number, do any of the characters have a lucky word, number, item, or anything of the sort?

Well, Rocky deemed 3 a lucky number and gave it to Freckle, but it's questionable that Freckle feels the same way about it or that Rocky was being entirely genuine about it. Rocky does seem to consider his monogrammed tie to be lucky, though. Mitzi's pretty sentimentally attached to her pearl and emerald necklace. She hawked mostly everything of value that she could do without to keep the business running, but couldn't part with that.

Zib's got a hipflask that seems to be his constant companion...does that count?

Wick's got a collection of historic flintlock pistols he's particularly fond of.

I guess you could say the Savoy's have a lucky...demon...ghost...friend. They've chosen the white gator as their personal loa and sigil, more or less.

Atlas seems to have placed some kind of significance on daisies as both of his businesses carried the name in some sense. You can make of that what you will, I suppose.

Bi-Freck-ual

How do Serafine and Nico generally get along with kids? Would either of them be open to the possibility of raising one? What about Zib?

I can't imagine at this point in their lives that Nico or Serafine would really want children around. At a wholly different stage of life, however, I could envision Nico at least having the patience to put up with a child. Whether he'd take a keen interest in this hypothetical child is questionable. Still, he'd be a fun uncle-type to hang out with for any kid who likes animals and swimming and fishing and playing in the mud. Serafine would probably be more interested in a child in a developmental and psychological sense, but not necessarily in a practical, well adjusted sense. I don't know if she'd be able to resist messing with a kid's head. I think she could be nurturing in her own way, but the child would probably be inculcated into some rather unusual,uh, perspectives.

Zib definitely doesn't perceive himself as the conventional family man sort. I think he has a little bit of disdain for that sort of traditionalism, but deep down it's perhaps because the idea would terrify him. He might say it's because he'd feel trapped and creatively stifled, but it might have more to do with the fear of being so wholly responsible for someone else's life and well-being. If he was in a position of having to care for a child, though, I could envision him eventually dredging up from within the capacity for self-sacrifice it would require...however grudgingly, however panicky it'd make him feel beneath the surface.

- How well did Viktor and Ruby know each other? What did they think of each other?

Pretty well. Ruby trusted Atlas' judgment and Atlas had essentially hand picked Viktor, in a crass sense, like plucking the dog with the right potential out of the pound. So, as Ruby saw it, Viktor was himself trustworthy and, demonstrably, there was never any question of his effectiveness at his job. Viktor likewise would have recognized Ruby's usefulness, but he would

have been disconcerted or even resentful of the way Ruby mixed family and business, sort of casually bringing Ivy along and as if it was the most natural thing in the world - as if he had a normal, civil, upstanding job. He'd have kept his thoughts on it to himself though, perhaps in part out of shame over his own familial failings.

I wouldn't pin the title of friendship on it, exactly...general workplace camaraderie might be the best description. Ruby was in a bit more of a traveling salesman type of role, where Viktor was onsite. He never worked with Ruby as consistently and proximally as with Mordecai. Viktor's a tough nut to crack too, which is probably the most obvious thing I could say. Ruby, being a gregarious sort, would have made some effort to ingratiate himself and to engage him in conversation, but he'd have hit a fairly monosyllabic wall and would not have had as much success as Ivy at trespassing beyond that into a more personal space.

- Would knowing Rocky's past affect Viktor's opinion of him in any way?

Maybe slightly. He wouldn't think Rocky's past really justifies his present, though, or the harm he could do. Understanding where someone comes from doesn't necessarily mean sympathizing with the decisions they've made as a result. For what it's worth, I don't think Viktor believes any longer that his own past justifies his present either.

- If Calvin weren't Ivy's boyfriend, what would Viktor think of him?

He'd think he was a foolish, messed up kid. He might have an iota of sympathy for someone who, in his youth, was foolish and messed up, though.

- What can you tell us about Dom's family?

He's married with kids. He doesn't talk openly about it, though. He's amiable with his colleagues and converses with them, but never about that aspect of his private life. He doesn't even keep photos on his desk. No one around him is quite sure if it's because he's more of an ambitious career man than a family man, or if he just compartmentalizes very thoroughly. There would certainly be good reason for the latter in his line of work.

- What sort of social media would Serafine and Nico use, and what would they use it for?

Hehe. I don't know. I guess they'd have a pretty off-the-rails YouTube channel...like some bizarre version of Jackass that involved a lot of cooking and ghost hunting. The content would surely be demonetized.

Bi-Freck-ual

How would Nina and Abelard get along?

Probably not especially well. If they were able to have an unemotional, granular discussion, they'd likely find they agreed on a number of social and political issues, but Protestants were defectors and veritable apostates to Catholics, and Catholics were practically pagan papists in Protestant summation. They might both be a little too strident and take themselves a little too seriously to be in the same room together for very long.

Ignis

Is there any ships that you would support regarding Lackadaisy characters if they fit better into canon?

I don't really take a position of support or non-support about ships. I might be amused, surprised, or even convinced of the compatibility of certain character personalities based on what readers conjure up, for the sake of the thought experiment. I definitely would consider some more plausible than others...but sometimes the Crack ships are the most fun to entertain.

I'm not going to pass any judgment on anyone for what they personally like or dislike in that department, though. I wouldn't want to interfere by dubbing some ships more valid than others either. Heck, if anyone is interested enough in my characters to ship them in whatever arrangement, consider me very flattered.

Casheen Zeppeli

Hi Tracy I really love lackadaisy, and also are you planning to put some new characters in lackadaisy?

Yes, but what I would consider to be the main cast have all been introduced. There are some lower tier players who haven't appeared yet.

Hatter "Bugle Boy" III

if something stopped you from setting Lackadaisy in the 1920's, where in history would you set it?

Way, way back, I very briefly considered a post WWII setting - a rowdy night club in the late 1940s for a setting, with swing dancing and big band music and brawls.

Now, if I had to pick something else, I'm not so sure. It's so interwoven with the 20s in my head at this point, it's hard to seriously consider...but at a basic level, I guess it could work almost anywhere. The Lackadaisy could have been a wild west saloon in the 1870s, or a pirate ship in the 1700s, or some kind of discoteque cocaine trafficking operation in the late 1970s/early 1980s.

(I believe at this point in the audio chat, Newt suggested Lackadaisy in Space.)

Kip

Hi Tracy! I have another question. I asked about tips for writing dialogue, but I wonder what your inspiration for it is? Have you read books, or maybe watched movies that use early 20th century language? Is there maybe something in particular that inspires you?

Reading things contemporaneous to the period you're working with can be very helpful. For

the 1920s, obviously the best known is Fitzgerald, but there's a great deal more than that to work with. Agatha Christie, P.G. Wodehouse also wrote and published a good deal of material then. Faulkner began publishing I think in about 1930, which is proximal enough. Hemingway wrote at least a few of his books in the 20s. There's a litany of authors to choose from, though. Radio also became quite popular in the 20s, and so there's plenty of audio reference to work with. Most of what you'll find (there's a bunch of it on Youtube alone, and various online "stations" that feature such material) is performative or journalistic, but you can occasionally find interviews or discussions as well, wherein you can sample more natural, unscripted conversation.

Pay attention to syntax and parlance. By and large, it's not not especially different from today. People weren't speaking a different language altogether, or speaking in incessant slang, which is why I suggested earlier that you write what feels natural to you, then comb back over it to swap in more timely turns of phrase and to weed out for words that just weren't in the common lexicon at the time. Anything that was made about the 20s long after the 20s (Thoroughly Modern Millie comes to mind) will be more of a caricature of the 20s where more sober, "serious" literature will probably paint a somewhat more realistic picture. It's not wrong to pull inspiration from either or both of these types of places, depending on what you're trying to achieve stylistically.

One of the most important things is to be consistent about your characterization of a given period through dialog, and to constrain your characterization enough that it doesn't interfere with clear communication. Foremost, don't obfuscate. Readers shouldn't have to pause to translate after each character speaks. And if the characterization waffles between that of a bubbly cartoon and something far more dour, it's going to be jarring. Readers will tend to settle in and accept the style you're using if you as the author commit to it. You may not be writing with a purist's idea of historicity, but it doesn't necessarily need to be so in order to be convincing.

I think I've mentioned before in other Q&A sessions Cassell's Dictionary of Slang. It's quite a dense book and the contents are really pretty fun and enlightening to peruse. You might also

find that useful!

Bi-Freck-ual

Wait, one more, what is Ivy majoring in?

Advanced Prevarication, Chicanery and Razmatazz?

She's a freshman. I think I've mentioned before she has some vague ideas about teaching or maaaybe journalism, but she's not taking school especially seriously just now. It's largely an excuse to be away from home, to find adventure and to indulge in her little socialite lifestyle.

CitizenZombieProductions

Do any of the Lackadaisy characters have any favorite genre of music or artists?

Oh, sure. I mean, probably for a lot of them the answer would be jazz. That is certainly the case for Zib, anyway, although he came to it after delving into ragtime and barrelhouse too. I think Mitzi'd have a fondness for the blues. She's probably sort of silently humming blues tunes in her head much of the time. She's no stranger to folk music either, having grown up with a banjo. Rocky I imagine would have just about as much love for Irish reels, folk fiddle and classical music as he would for jazz and Joe Venuti.

Toby

Have any ever eaten an entire raw potato?

I'd be surprised and disappointed if Rocky hadn't at least attempted that on a dare or a bet or, you know, because there was a potato in his hand. There's a lot of potato in Slovak cuisine too. It's feasible Viktor ate a raw potato at some point for some reason while living the rural life. That's a story that will never be recounted to anyone ever, though.

AstroFreck

I've always wanted to know who would win in a physical altercation between Mordecai and Calvin? It seems like they would be somewhat evenly matched, with Calvin even having an upperhand in agility. Not to mention age. Preferably non-deadly, though. Them's my two favourite bois.

In a hand to hand sort of way without weapons? A tough call, I suppose. Freckle is quick and agile and a bundle of surprising strength equipped with little Popeye arms when he's riled up. He'd arguably be pretty good at wrestling and grappling with his low center of gravity. He's not very level headed or cautious, though. His 'discipline' is blind fury. Mordecai's can throw an adequate punch, but he's no brawler and would generally avoid engaging in fisticuffs if at all possible. Still, he's much more controlled and experienced than Freckle. And, while he's terrible at reading anyone on an emotional level, he's sharp at anticipating an opponent's physical movement. He'd also likely introduce an improvised weapon to a no-weapons fight. It would be the practical thing to do.

I may spoil some things by opining directly on who'd win, though.

Ms. mina the greg

Hello tracy, are you going to kill one of the main cast, if so then who will it be?

There are character deaths, and yeah, main characters aren't immune. I can't really say much more than that without giving too much away, though. Sorry!

Wheaty

Here's one for you Tracy, do you know how to swing dance?

Heck no. I wish I did. Hell, I'd be happy if I could just generic-dance in a competent, confident sort of way. Alas, I am an awkward dork. My compliments to anyone who can dance with that kind of coordination and gusto, though.