

Backstage at Cry Havoc!

Making Murder Funny

Content Notes

- Murder and Assassination
- Discussions of; Political corruption, inequality
- Mentions of; war, poverty
- SFX: Crowds

[Show Theme - Intro]

LOWRI

Hello everybody and welcome to this week's Backstage at Cry Havoc. I am your host, Lowri Ann Davies, she / her. And today we are going to be talking about how to make murder funny because it is hilarious apparently. And joining me to discuss this topic are David K. Barnes, Grace Knight and Robert Valentine. Please will you introduce yourselves with your pronouns and a little bit about you and your involvement in Cry Havoc. David, let's go first since you are the seasoned backstager at this point.

DAVID

Hello, I'm David, the seasoned back-stager. He, him the creator and lead writer on Cry Havoc.

LOWRI

Lovely alphabetical Grace.

GRACE

Hello, I'm Grace Knight, pronouns she / her and I am one of the writers on Cry Havoc and I wrote the episode we're talking about today, episode 18.

LOWRI

And Rob.

ROB

Hi, I'm Rob Valentine, he / him and yeah, I often come last in alphabetical lists as I do today. Yeah. Oh, and I'm a writer

OTHERS

[laugh]

ROB

I've written some of Cry Havoc. There you go.

LOWRI

You have. We were also talking about episode 16 today, which is one of Rob's episodes. And on that note, episode 16 and 18, we've talked a bit about a 17. We've had Grace on before, what happens in 16 and 18? Do you want me to do a quick summary or would you like to take your own episodes and tell everyone what they've just listened to? Hopefully, really.

ROB

Oh, do you know what you go ahead. Because it'd be embarrassing if I forget.

DAVID

[laughs]

LOWRI

Right. Episode 16, oh, I should have written the titles down, that was silly.

ROB

Oh, it's called Daggers.

DAVID

Yes it is.

LOWRI

Oh, it is called Daggers. So Mark and Cleo have just finally got together. Cleo has a request of Mark, a suggestion maybe that he kills Gaius. and he doesn't want to, and then Cleo orders Charmian to, and then Mark talks to Fulvia has a change of heart, or at least is convinced by, I kind of think of him as having two Lady Macbeths.

OTHERS

[laugh]

LOWRI

Pushing him to do this thing. And even then it's not enough. He gets to the room, looks at Gaius sleeping and he can't bring himself to do it. Charmian comes in and he inadvertently saves Gaius's life, which Fulvia is delighted about naturally. Also, Gaius is writing a speech during this, which I'm really, really thankful we do not have to listen to because it sounds like it would've been

awful. So 17 we've discussed last time, and in episode 18, rescue Charmian is mounted if I am correct?

DAVID

Yes.

LOWRI

And a very important list is written. Well, two important lists are featured in episode 18 and one may end up in the wrong place. I think that's enough of a summary. Is it?

ROB

Yeah, it works for me.

LOWRI

I regret offering my services. [laughs] So a little rewind before we talk about the episodes themselves. Grace and David, I know you haven't worked together before. Rob and David, do you have a previous relationship to this? And Grace and Rob?

GRACE

We've literally never met.

ROB

Yeah, this is our first meeting.

GRACE

It is. I think we've been on the same email chains. That's literally as much as we can say.

I liked your tone; professionally yet warm.

ROB

Thank you very much.

DAVID

I know of Rob through Wireless theatre and Big Finish. Indeed, I've written a script for Rob a few months ago, which was due about a year before. He was very, very kind. Very kind indeed. But this is the first time I think we've properly actually worked together was on Cry Havoc and it was lovely.

ROB

Yeah, this was our first experience of working together and it was so much fun. I mean one of the many draws of saying yes was just to get to it with David.

DAVID

[whispering under Rob] Me. Me!

ROB

And hope it was, it was a nice thing. Fortunately it was because if it hadn't been, it would've sucked.

LOWRI

And this would've been a really awkward time.

ROB

Yeah, this would've been a really, really tense conversation with literal daggers being spat down Skype at each other. But actually it was huge fun and just a really happy writing experience for me at least. And David had more to do than I did, but I could just kind of waft in, do my bit, then kind of saunter back out again. David was kind of in it for the long haul.

GRACE

Yeah.

ROB

But yeah, it was huge fun to do.

GRACE

Likewise, actually, I dunno if I said that on my last episode, but it was like you got exactly the right amount of support from David and from Amani actually, and I always felt very supported but also massively free. So I think particularly because my episodes had to change a lot because changes were made earlier in the series and obviously mine were the latest ones that weren't literally written by David. It was like I just always felt so kind of respected as a professional but also so supported that if there was anything I wanted to touch base with, I always could. It was just such a pleasant writing experience and yeah it was I had a ball, it was great.

LOWRI

Oh, that's good.

GRACE

So good job, David.

DAVID

I'm going to type up those quotes and frame them on my wall.

GRACE

[laugh]

DAVID

I'm very glad to hear it. Genuinely, very glad. I think the role of a guest writer on a show should be to come in, have lots of lovely discussions, write lovely scripts, and then wander away hopefully out of care in the world. And it's the job of the head writer to then have all the multiple breakdowns afterwards going, oh my God, how is all working?

LOWRI

Oh no!

DAVID

There's always lots of work to do later on when you're trying to make sure reference that has gone into this and that and the other thing. But I don't want to bother writers with that. It's just you've given me a great script, I'm just going to turn those lines around. It'll be fine. It'll be fine.

LOWRI

I would like to talk about the writer's group aspect of this actually. Cause it's so interesting to me that Rob's episode 16, it's the same scene actually as the opening of 18, right?

GRACE

Yeah. Opening of 17.

LOWRI

Oh, 17, sorry. Maths. And the fact that you Grace and Rob hadn't met before this to have an individual conversation is just mind boggling to me and the fact that things would've changed, what kind of things were changing and how did that work?

GRACE

Oh, David, let me see an early draft of Rob's script just so I could see literally what was happening in the scene I was continuing to write, which I think was very, it was very useful just from the perspective of not losing my mind, but also in terms of trying to get a tone match because obviously it is a different episode, but if you're listening to them back to back, it's going to sound really weird if you're not, if our interpretations of characters are a bit off and obviously David is going to edit and oversee that anyway, but it's better to just do the job properly the first time. And in terms of changes, I think, so I wrote my outlines for the episodes. Did I even write the first drafts? And then you were like, "oh yeah, we've changed some things. Er, sorry".

DAVID

Yes. I can't remember exactly.

GRACE

I can't remember at what stage. I remember laughing.

DAVID

Yes [laughs]

GRACE

Which... [laughs]

DAVID

Yes, I think there were a few points I did change. I think actually the point where Octavia found out that Charmian was working for Cleopatra changed that did then have a knock on effect I think on these characters know this, this knows this.

GRACE

Yeah. So it was all stuff where I think things where the reveal scene had or hadn't been in my sections and I had to just kind of rejig, but it was always super clear what I needed to change. And actually cause David is very sweet and very keen for writers not to have to do any work. He was always like, okay, so I think the minimal change you can do is probably do this bit, just change this scene a bit and I'm just like, it really is literally my job, so it is fine.

DAVID

Yeah. Yeah. I don't like people who work, I just think it's impolite.

LOWRI

I've got to say that I at one point in this Backstage series have wanted to say that I really appreciate that Octavia knows that Charmian is a spy from very early on. So I think that was a great call because I think it makes their relationship more real. I hate it where you're like, you're supposed to be in love and really like each other and you've got this huge secret.

GRACE

Yeah, and also I think it's much more narratively interesting for Octavia because when she's totally floored by the assassination attempt, she's like, but you didn't tell me. And Charmian's like, yes, I really did. And it really kind of illustrates Octavia's privilege as a character and her inability to register that these things that she's doing are part of real politics, that they actually matter. And then not just her having some japes.

DAVID

I remember actually that's the effect of Rob's episodes as well. Cause you've got the orgy episode and the episode 16 after. Yeah, me and Amani would often discuss when certain revelations should happen. I don't like too many to happen in one go, but I say, yeah, they've just reached a point of Octavia and Charmian are a couple together as of the end of the pirates. And that was always baked in at that point. But I thought, you know what? And I rang up Tom and said, you're right in the episode, can you rewrite that last scene just one more time? But this time with revelation of that, she does say to Octavia, look, I'm a spy and Octavia going... And I thought, actually it'd be quite fun if Octavia went, oh, you're a spy. That's really hot. Yeah, sure, that's fine. And maybe just

moved on from there. Thought it's a better way of expressing her sort of distaste of politics and thinking, oh, she's above it all.

If she literally knows that her lover is a spy working for the opposition against her own brother and she doesn't feel the need to tell him or feel that that's even a conflict of interest until around at this point when it is and then it gives Octavia more rather than just, oh my God, you lied to me. No, I God, I was also complicit in this and I'm angry at myself, so I'm going to be even angrier at you as a result of that. And it gives Grace far more to do, give Rob more to do in his scripts as well, in the orgy thing as well, it's like, well, you know what's going on here, why are you getting annoyed at me? I like to give actors more to do as well. Just go, here's some stuff. Here's for the acting. Good acting.

GRACE

Do a bit of acting. But I also think Lowri, you make a really good point that it really is important for our buy-in into that relationship, like, because I have the same problem you do. If there's kind of a rom-com setup where one of them is lying to the other one about who they are or what they are or whatever. It's really hard to invest because you're just like, okay, but you know, fundamentally you have lied about a lot of quite important stuff and I appreciate that, obviously that doesn't mean you're not taking the relationship seriously and all of that, but I just think it's just better if you can just invest, especially if the drama is going to come from these people being forced apart rather than internal relationship drama.

ROB

And you are prevented from investing until both parties know each other properly until the revelation that happens. You are just waiting for everyone to

get up to speed with you and then you can invest. What is fascinating about Octavia is that it's no different from being born into any kind of powerful family, a Mafia family or something. She has all the information, but she doesn't understand the implications of any of it, and that's a failure of understanding and comprehension on her part. Not a lack of knowledge.

GRACE

Not a failure of knowledge. Yeah, absolutely. She's been so insulated.

LOWRI

Okay, so let's get to what this episode has been titled for, which is murder and assassination and making it funny. [laughs] You know, I've been thinking a lot about how to ask this, but I guess my question is how do you do that because horrible and how do you go about making a topic that is so repulsive in a way? Is that true? Strong a word? No murder's awful. And like the prescriptions. Oh, sweet Lord, what I've learned over this series. How do you go about Inserting comedy into a situation like that?

DAVID

That? I think writers are quite distanced from the horror of murder because we kill off so many characters in scripts all the time.

LOWRI

Oh, interesting take.

DAVID

I think all three of us have some experience writing that sci-fi or sci-fi adventure type stuff. And any given adventure story will have random people being bumped off by the monster of the week or some robot or whatever, and then somebody, there'll be a heroic sacrifice or something. So murder and death happens quite a lot in writing, so I usually assume it's quite funny and then have to remind [laughs] myself it's not. But I think it's context, isn't it? It's a context which a murder is done. If it's a coldblooded killing done seriously with big serious intent, it's not funny. It's a sad, but if it's a murder done in panic or if the person doesn't have the full context of what they're doing or don't know that they're ruining somebody else's better murder plot by trying to carry out their own, that's quite funny because then you are seeing people fail to do something, especially in a context where you'd expect they'd be very good at it because it's ancient Rome, therefore, and you realise, no, actually even Mark Anthony finds it hard to stab someone when they're not on a battlefield. And it's quite fun cause it plays with our conception of who we think he is.

LOWRI

Rob and Grace, are you happy being tarred with that brush of writers who are just bored with murder now, it's commonplace.

GRACE

Umm, I'm actually not really not like that. I have written a lot of sci-fi because I love spaceships and time machines, but I'm very squeamish about killing people off and I'll go to [laughs] great lengths to avoid it. I think for me, the whole purpose of episode 18, the whole way it's structured, cause I reread it this morning just to remind myself what I said. The whole way it's structured is

basically building to that decision. And so for a start, answer number one for how you make murder funny is put the murder in at the end cause then the rest of the episode is still funny. So I think really the question is, having done that in episode 18, how do you make episode 19 funny? So if you think about how episode 18 is structured, it's got this big subplot, which is like pure japes. It's literally a heist with silly hats and makeup and people a little bit out of their comfort zone. And it's like, let's go rescue your girlfriend. It's going to be really fun. And it's just pure nonsense. But the a plot, it starts out completely light. Like they're joking, they're like, "oh, I wish we could do that. Oh my God, who would you put on the list?"

DAVID

Yeah, it starts off funny and then sort of gets more serious as it goes where I think Rob's 16 is sort of the opposite, where it starts serious, with people very serious talking about death, and then once we actually get to it, it all goes wrong and it becomes very silly.

ROB

Yeah, well that kind comes onto my perspective. I mean, as a writer you do kill a lot of people, but in fiction oftentimes you're dealing with symbols and certain storylines and characters representing certain things, and the death of character is in some ways you have a bit like a Jungien perspective on it. It can be the death of an idea, that kind of thing, which in some ways what stories do. But in terms of Cry Havoc and Daggers, it's not really about making the decision to kill people funny. It's just about highlighting that it's inherently ridiculous. Killing someone to solve your problem is the most permanent and stupid thing you can do, and people do it in real life. The whole idea of flying to the UK with

some radioactive isotopes or some nerve toxin to bump off a journalist or two is stupid, but this stuff happens.

So really Daggers is about the ridiculousness of murder as an extension of policy. I think that's really what it comes down to. And also these decisions are so domestic, their decisions and the whole thing is about power, but these decisions made in bedrooms and kitchens, and that's where these kind of decisions get made. They don't get made in the meeting rooms or delegation chambers or anything like that. They get made at the urinal, and that's how this level of politics and power operates and it's real and it's horrible and it's obscene and yeah, you don't have to mine for the comedy really because it's there just in the whole concept. And that's what Daggers is about.

DAVID

I think there's a nice contrast that Daggers is all about very much of the personal, it's Mark Anthony grappling with the idea of personally putting the dagger in personally carrying out his own murder, which is when he then prevaricate quite a lot when it gets to Grace's episode, they're all talking about people they'd like to kill, it's more distanced. They're talking about it as a, that's a thing that would be good to happen and wear it to happen. And at the end they give it to some assassins to do, then they can just sit back and see what goes on. Mark finds it very difficult to do death when he has to personally do it himself. But it's much easier to talk about when it feels like a game when somebody's saying, here's the dagger, go and kill that man, it's serious when it's sitting around a table talking about it.

You can disassociate yourself from the effects of what your actions will be, which is I guess a lot of the things in political decisions are made by people at the table or in a bar. And you can talk about it quite abstractly, but somebody

somewhere is going to feel that the very real effects of whatever policy you've made, that means they'll have less money in their pocket or they can't afford that food or they can't do this, or they're going to get bumped off by an assassination conspiracy that's gone wrong. And there's something different about that, they, Gaius and Mark and Lepidus do lots of laughing in Grace's episode 18. Oh, it is all up there. Mark doesn't do any laughing at all in 16 because people are standing right around and going, "go on. Then you personally go and do it". And that's quite funny because the big general can't bring himself to go and enact what should be a perfectly simple assassination plot and he totally fails.

And then there's a seriousness of, I suppose, the contrast of asking somebody with great power to do something like that against asking someone like Charmian who has no power at all in this, to go and do something that she clearly doesn't want to do. Mark could probably talk himself out of it if he wanted to. Charmian can't do that. She's got to go and try and kill Gaius because Cleopatra's told her to, and there is no choice to it. And that's a real sort of tragedy. So you can have your serious plot line with Charmian and your comedy plot line of Mark, which then hit each other at the end and turn into a punchline.

ROB

But also in Mark Anthony's case, he is a soldier. He's killed lots of people, but he's not an assassin. He's going into it thinking, yeah, I've killed before. I've done loads. It's a really simple thing to do. But then he's faced with murdering a colleague in their sleep and it shows you what he is and what he isn't.

GRACE

Yeah, but I think you make a very good point that having episode 18 happen in the context of Mark's failure of humanity, essentially, like he couldn't do it. I think it really is very interesting that by the end of the episode, he's sentenced 12 people to death, as far as he knows, you know.

DAVID

Yes.

GRACE

And done it without a second thought and done it by just incrementally getting used to the idea and deciding that they were worth it. And the thing is as well, I think it's worth remembering that both of these people have done this before, asked for people to be assassinated before. I mean, got Crasus and what's his name murdered before the start of the series. They're not very nice people and they don't have very clean hands.

DAVID

That's the other thing I suppose it comes into. Yeah, he must assume that if you're going to murder a bunch of people, someone's going to want to murder you, so why not consider that?

LOWRI

Yeah, that's the logical conclusion.

ROB

That might actually be one difference between Mark contemplating assassinating Gaius and the assassinations later. The assassinations later are to

help maintain the status quo rather than create a brand new unknown situation that Mark hasn't got any real idea what it'll be like. Him figuratively, not literally, in bed with Cleopatra

LOWRI

Yeah.

ROB

And in charge and with the target on his back. And I think just in terms of the way we all behave, we all behave conservatively. And I think we tend to do a lot more to maintain what we know, than go into a new realm of unknowns

DAVID

Yeah. In episode 18 and beyond. They want to kill off a bunch of people to get the money to pay off soldiers so we can just return to square one. Whereas I suppose, yes, killing off Gaius creates a different, what does the future hold?

How will Mark rule what's going to actually happen? And that's quite frightening. If you're just trying get things back to how they were or to square something off, that's sometimes easier unless you get it wrong an accident, you sign the death sentence for about 100, 200 hundred people, because they're on Lepidus's birthday list.

That was a ridiculous idea, which I mentioned it to a consultant at the very beginning and they went, that sounds very funny. I went, okay, the consultant liked it, I'll keep it. I thought that's ridiculous. But alright, yeah, it's the best way I can think of. Having something like innocence get in the way and cause great devastation, which is I think where it take 19, which I think has just been released, which is the fallout of them realising what they've done and

essentially panicking about it. And actually, I remember now this is one of the bits of plotting that I came up very, very early on is how we're going to end the series. And for some reason I just watched Dr. Strangelove, which is a 1960s film about an American general who loses the plot essentially and sends planes with nuclear bombs into Russia to attack Russia and then needs to go to a nuclear war.

It's a very dark, satirical fast, but there is where all the American presence and all the characters around him or the advisors are looking at this big map and they can see all the planes going out to their targets and they're wondering, do we recall them? If this does happen, do we commit to it? They will attack us, or do we try to help the Russians to not do this? What do we do? Do we own this?

How do we play the situation for maximum political effect and to keep our jobs? And that's the bit where I thought, oh, what if the main characters in this have signed the wrong warrants and assassins are going out across the republic and they don't know whether they should get them back, own up to it, not own up to it, blame someone else, and they just panic. And the longer they spend discussing it, the fewer options they will have. So I nicked that because writers like nicking things and that's where that came from.

LOWRI

It's a lesser crime than murder. So, you know.

DAVID

[laughs]

ROB

Is it? Is it?!

LOWRI

Ah, okay. No, let's not go there. Let's not go there. A question that's just occurred to me that I haven't given you a heads up about, but I have faith.

DAVID

Oh no.

LOWRI

Why make murder funny?

GRACE

Ooh!

ROB

Well, I'd say there's no need because in a way it is already, it all depends on the perspective you choose to present it in. Cause it's inherently ridiculous. And one of the most imbecilic things a human being can possibly do to another human being for multiple reasons. So, you know, if you squint right, it is funny.

LOWRI

I've thoughts on that, but Grace continue yours.

GRACE

Okay, well, so one thing I've thought of another answer to how to make murder funny question, which is basic writing 101, focus on the perpetrator because it's absolutely, it's really only funny for them. And why make it funny? I think

because it's quite difficult for humans to engage with the things that they don't like about humans in any kind of meaningful way. I think we don't enjoy because we are basically empathic creatures thinking about humans being brutal or cruel or barbaric. We don't like thinking about just all of this horrible stuff. But I think humans are basically creatures of context. And I think that is the only explanation that it allows me to make sense of the vast, vast array of different behaviours that we're capable of. And I think the only way we are going to understand that is if we are willing to engage with the possibility that we were angels and the possibility that we were demons.

And I think for that, you have to be able to engage with it. And so I think by making it funny is a way of engaging with it in a way that is emotionally a little bit less hard on the listener. And also I think as Rob says, by exposing the ridiculousness of it, it kind of undermines its power a little bit, which is also an interesting way because there've been lots of studies that have demonstrated that the idea of violence and video games leading to real life violence is sheer nonsense. However, I do think that we do have a bit of a tendency, particularly if we are a major HBO drama to sort of glamorise the ability to be a ruthless killer and that kind of thing. And I think the best weapon against that kind of like, "yeah, but it's a bit cool, isn't it ?" kind of attitude is a send up. And so I think there's something quite powerful about taking someone with enormous power and just making them look silly.

DAVID

Yeah.

ROB

Yes. I mean I think it was Francois Truffaut said that he thought it was impossible to make an anti-war film because cinema can't tackle the subject of war without making it look cool. And the whole idea of murder is, killing people is a horrific thing. But there, there's a pathetic weakness in people deciding to kill other people. And I think one of the places that comedy comes from in that is a degree of relief about that revelation, but also the gap between the expectation and the result of someone in a comic piece deciding to kill someone and then the outcome. And because it's such a dark subject that relief is great.

DAVID

Partly it's the motivation of, I think murder in itself isn't funny. And a story for instance, in which a very capable assassin finds their victim and bumps them off is not funny. That's just somebody, that could be very suspenseful, could be quite dangerous. But I think Grace is quite right saying it's not funny, if you concentrate on the victim, it's not funny because all you'll see is either somebody who doesn't know what's happening to them or abject distress. So you can't say on the person who's going to do the killing, if it's somebody who can do it perfectly well, that's still not going to be very entertaining. So it's the context in which the character is, if it's a person who has no idea what they're doing and what you are enjoying, there is the relief of taking something which is very serious and finding the silliness in it, which is, oh dear, I dunno what, I'm really scared.

What if I ruin this? What if I get it wrong? What if something... that can be quite fun, something that we can relate to? Whereas if it's a powerful person doing it and then getting it wrong, we can sort of use that as a way to laugh at power. I think murder like death generally, having just came off a sitcom about

funerals for four seasons where we try to get laughs out of death there, it's just because it is one of those very big subjects about which we always have a slight sort of slight agitation. So the smallest smile or laugh can sort of give us a great deal of relief, I think. I suppose that's one thing about comedy and scripted murder and murder plots, both rely on suspense of a sort, which is why I think as audiences we find Albert Hitchcock movies were very entertaining because they were very suspenseful and we kind of like that.

We enjoy knowing what's going to happen and hiding behind a pillow or laughing out loud. Comedy and suspense and horror are all along the same kind of line. It just depends on whose side you are on, whether it's slow or fast, where they always say comedy is tragedy sped up. And yeah, I think it's the manner in which it's presented. I don't find distress very funny at all. I'm sure most people would agree, the signs of distress aren't very funny. But if an assassin walks into a room and it's somebody in bed and they go, oh God, they start crying, please don't kill me. That's not funny. If somebody walks into your room with a sword and you go, oh, for God's sake, what now? That is funny because it's just that it's a subversion of expectations and a different attitude.

And then eventually if that scene ends with a person in a room arguing the assassin out of them saying, "I have had it up here. I've had a terrible day, I've done this, this and this, and you are here. No, we're going to do it tomorrow. If you've going to kill me, do it tomorrow. I'm tired. I'm having..." and kick him out. I find that quite funny. And then you'd be with the assassin going, how did I get argued out of that room? All I had to do was stab him, but I'm going to have to go and book a room now. Okay, fine. I'm going to go downstairs.

Alright.

LOWRI

[laughs]

GRACE

[laughs] That is correct. Hilarious. But also part of the reason that's funny is because you're no longer dealing with a powerless victim.

OTHERS

[make noises of agreement]

GRACE

So you get the laugh out of the surprise of like, I'm sorry, seriously, not another thing. But then you also, you get the kind of relief of like, oh, okay, it's actually we're going to be fine, isn't it? Like this person's going to talk their way out of this.

DAVID

Maybe it's just the examination of power as to is murder funny? No, not inherently, but as a prism to examine power, like Rob was saying, the sheer need to merge someone at all indicates a very weird psychological power that you've had to resort to that. So that could be ridiculous, but it depends on who the victim is and who the perpetrator is. A person with very little power, setting out to murder somebody at the top of society is a different story from somebody with a lot of power picking up somebody who has no power at all. And it's how murder reflects that imbalance. And then yes, there's subversion of expectation and say as somebody, all those horror films that have a serial killer hunting after somebody at the end and they're using their ingenuity to try and get away are suspenseful. They're not funny, but there are plenty of films

with assassinations and murders or even horror comedies which get lots of laughs out of a serious situation, which the characters are just responding in a way we're not used to seeing. Usually irritation.

LOWRI

Yeah, irritation is hilarious.

GRACE

Yes.

DAVID

Yeah. Yeah.

GRACE

Something else I think is important, and I haven't decided in which direction is that the victims they're talking about killing are a bunch of senators we know to be corrupt.

DAVID

Yeah.

GRACE

Or at least we know to be presented by the narrative and by Gaius and Mark as having failed morally.

DAVID

Yeah, and they're characters we've not really met that much. We've seen a couple of senators, but we don't spend much time with them, so they're quite faceless.

GRACE

So actually the only thing we know about them is that they're rich, which I think is obviously a pretty good cipher for power. So that makes them a bit less sympathetic.

DAVID

Yeah, I think if it were, let's sit around, let's see if we can like, kill off for the people in the poor quarters and the slums, I don't think there'd be any way in which would could gain power, but then we wouldn't be going that way anyway. Because it's a bunch of some people whose job it is to tell all these people just below them in the Senate to try and work with them on a solution. And nobody can, I think, well, let's just kill them. And because they're all very rich people, as you say, who are corrupt and who we've only seen, the only times we see them in the series is usually to obstruct plans, which might've otherwise worked, were it not for self-interest.

ROB

What can be funny though is if your having some kind of policy, economic policy meeting and then the decision to murder the poor is suddenly funny.

GRACE

[sarcastically] Oh, hilarious. Every time, gets me.

DAVID

That's a Mitchell and Web sketch, isn't it? The sort of like, "kill the poor? Are you, what?"

ROB

I think one way to mine the comedy there is, there's the killing side, which is the delicate side, but the place to mine the arch ridiculousness of it is the decision to kill and the act, are the two, they're the two far ends of making murder funny.

DAVID

Yes. Because the joke then is on the person who's coming up with the idea. It's like the joke isn't that it'll be funny to go and destroy these people. The joke is that they are people in society who you can bet are at the top of the chain going, oh, secretly I could. So it's a joke about the horrendous moral vacuity of people in that society, but it's not a joke about the murder itself.

GRACE

Absolutely. I also think there is a kind of knee joke response, like every time my partner comes in and tells me something the Tories have been up to recently. I laugh.

DAVID

[laughing] Yes.

GRACE

It's not exactly that I think it's funny.

DAVID

No.

GRACE

But it's sort of almost like incredulity, like...

DAVID

Yes.

GRACE

Because obviously if he's bothered to mention it to me it's because it's wild by the standards of what I already expect from Tories, which is, like, pretty out there. So it's like, okay,

LOWRI

Almost if you don't laugh you'll cry kind of vibe there.

GRACE

Yeah, yeah. Kind of. Yeah.

ROB

Yes.

GRACE

Although god, I hope that's not the note we've hit with this show.

ALL

[laugh]

LOWRI

Right. I'm going to wrap us there. Cause it's not. Thank you so much, all three of you for joining me for this, this was very, very interesting and we have run long again. And that is all my fault. I'm sorry, but I'm not really, I enjoyed it. So thank you audience for listening. I hope you enjoyed and I hope you listen to the final episode, it should be coming out next week, so I hope you're all excited for that. And I'll say goodbye because we will be back with Backstage next week and would everyone like to say goodbye with me?

ALL

Goodbye. Bye.

[Show Theme - Outro]

Hosted and Produced by Lowri Ann Davies

Directed by Amani Zardoe

Executive Producers: Alexander J. Newall & April Sumner

Editing by Lowri Ann Davies and Catherine Rinella

Music by Samuel D.F. Jones

Art by Gorilla