Interview with a Storyteller-Ester

Lisette Alvarez: [00:00:00] Welcome to Tales from the Hearth, a podcast with the Storyteller Project. This series is both experiment and interview. You may have listened to the first experiment, the wedding gift, and the following two months. I will be conducting interviews with fellow storytellers in a series called Interview with a Storyteller,

The next interview will be shared on February 15th, and the next experiment begins March 1st. So stay tuned for updates by signing up to our newsletter or following along on our social media. You can find your hearth@stormfireproductions.com [00:01:00] slash storyteller. Our first interview with a storyteller is a long one at one hour and 45 minutes, so feel free to set the speed accordingly, or honestly, you could skip through.

And yes, it is very sparsely edited. This is meant to be an uncensored resource of conversations between storytellers and the magic and craft of storytelling, specifically audio storytelling. It's about the worlds we create and the worlds we hope to build. And so, dear listeners, I welcome you into our Hear

Esther, please introduce yourself, who you are, what you do, and um, what kind of storyteller are you?

Ester Ellis: Hello, my name is Esther Ellis. I am a trans podcaster. I use, she, her and I make fiction podcast, which means I'm a writer, I'm a sound designer. [00:02:00] Uh, I do voice acting and many other roles, but these days I try to focus on the writing and the sound design.

I came up at the same time as our wonderful host making a show called Station Blue. I've since worked on shows like Hit the Bricks and Arden. I have my own show, the Golet Wire that I make with a lot of talented creators. Uh, and I also am probably best known for a show called Dungeons and Daddies, not a BDSM podcast, which is a Dungeons and Dragons podcast, which I am the lead editor on and the silent sound person on.

So all in all, I, my whole life is just centered around making audio stories, and that's where I'm trying to stay. Welcome,

Lisette Alvarez: Mr. And thank you so much for joining Tales From the Hearth, or as it's also known as The Storyteller Project. Um, so as a storyteller, I think it's probably most apropo [00:03:00] to first ask you to tell me a story.

So first this is, this is how I'm going to do this. You can tell me any true story, something that happened to you this week, something you've read. I just want a story like with a beginning, middle, and end, and about five minutes or less to tell it. Um, I'm gonna give you 30 min, 30 seconds to think about it.

Okay. If you wanna like, write down something and then, um, I'm gonna then put a timer on and see, uh, for five minutes, because I think you could do it. I think any, any, any, any, there's always something interesting happening in our lives. So, um, I wanna hear yours, so I'm gonna give you 30 seconds and you can just tell me when you're ready.

Ester Ellis: I think I'm ready. I have an improv background. Might as well put it excellent to the use.

Lisette Alvarez: Yes. And, okay. All right. I'm gonna be starting the clock, [00:04:00] uh, in three, two.

Ester Ellis: one. So I've been getting, trying to refocus on writing and I have a small pile of writing books and I notoriously do not like writing books at all.

Cuz anytime I'm reading a writing book, I'm like, I should be spending this time writing and then I do neither. And so come January of this year, I was like, you know what? All right, let me actually crack into these things. And to my delight, these writing books have been good. So I started, oh, what is it? I think it's The Art of Dramatic Storytelling, which is from the 1940s.

Uh, I do recommend it though, be known that it's very 1940s, from what I can tell the writer is a progressive person in the critiques he has in there. But you're gonna have plays with some offensive lingo. But, uh, I, I had that book and then next to it I have a book by this guy Iraqi, who makes this anime slash manga series, Jojo's Bazaar Adventure on [00:05:00] how you write like a Japanese comic action story.

And the differences of these books was nuts cuz dramatic writing, right? I'm getting into something I'm used to, which is build your character up, bring them to a high, knock them to a low, bring them back. Such and such. I'm getting into this Iraqi book and it's just going on about never let your hero lose, always go up.

Never the momentum, like our normal, I I would say what I was taught in school with like a, a story arc is the going up, the coming down the hill. He's like, no, always be going up. Always. Be increasing. So I'm trying to look at

different stories and like, how does this actually work? Like, cuz that does not seem like a very compelling storytelling device.

Uh, but in doing that, I, I was looking at things that I have experienced recently, um, and also getting into I am a, you [00:06:00] know, I edited Dungeons and Dragons podcast and there's a lot of drama right now about Wizards of the Coast slash Hasbro doing some shenanigans. Uh, they own Dungeons and Dragons. They're trying to make it where other creators have to pay them money to use their stuff, which isn't great.

Um, and so in getting into the storytelling though, is like, why do we use Dungeons and Dragons as a system for entertainment for people? And I think it applies to this manga action storytelling of always go up. You're always leveling up, you're always getting new items. Um, so that's like one area of storytelling where I'm like, okay, this checks out.

But I'm a, I'm a horror storyteller, so I'm also looking at my own stories and going, this, this doesn't necessarily you, it can work for that. Um, but it doesn't necessarily work for that. Uh, but then I started exploring both of these people's actual writing, like things they had made. And what was interesting is compared to these two with Iraqi, [00:07:00] his characters get torn up.

His characters is like going through his stories. I always think they're gonna lose. It feels like they're getting knocked down all the time. Uh, but ultimately they win, but it always feels like it's not gonna work out for them. Uh, and I found that interesting because this is a guy where he is like, you need to end the chapter better than you left it, which I guess makes sense if your whole writing format is a weekly format where you're in a magazine with like 10 other writers and you want the readers to keep up with what you're doing, uh, and.

How he implements that within his actual stories with like having a strong antagonist who's constantly knocking the hero down, but where the hero gets to overcome them. Um, I found that interesting. And so now I'm kind of looking at other stories and like, where would this apply? Where would this work and where do I think this, uh, where would this not work In my most humble of opinions, being someone who's [00:08:00] written for a grand total of like four or five years.

Uh, and so me going from not reading, writing books to now, I have consumed both of these writing books and I've put them side by side and I'm looking at the merits of both and where they compliment and where they don't. Uh, and I

found that to be my own interesting arc of coming across two things I don't like, which are writing books.

One with a completely, uh, foreign storytelling style to me, but that has produced works I like quite a bit. And one where I'm a little skeptical about, despite the fact that it comes from like a theater world, um, and you know, finding merit in both and finding challenges in both. And ultimately like it has enriched me I think as a writer.

So I would recommend both of those books. I know I didn't quite give the titles, but I'm sure you can find them, uh, and no others. How are we doing on time? Six

Lisette Alvarez: seconds left. [00:09:00]

Ester Ellis: great. And I haven't even done standup comedy. Look at that. Tight five.

Lisette Alvarez: Oh, there it goes. All right, well done. Um, that's actually really interesting cuz.

last year, I also was on a similar trajectory of, of not really. I had, I'd read the, uh, Stephen King's on writing years ago. Uh, but I never actually picked up another book on writing since. Uh, and then last year I read a bunch back to back to back. Um, and I'm sure I can throw a couple in the show notes, uh, when I think about, you know, digging through my library, um, and my Kindle.

So thank you. That was a great story. Uh, a well, well positioned to start us off, uh, for this interview. So my next question is more existential. Why do you tell

Ester Ellis: [00:10:00] stories, uh, immortality or not immortality, but a two. Have more of a, a shot at a full lifespan as far as we judge it as human beings, at least in the United States.

Uh, I, I don't know how dark you go on this show, um, but my, my, uh, living odds are not high as far as, uh, mental health and demographic and all of that goes. And so writing is a way where it's like, all right, if I don't make it and I'm trying to make it, I'm, I'm feeling really good about making it, but if I don't, and I can get this stuffed down, this can live a little bit longer than I can, and that it, it's pretty reptilian brain.

It doesn't go a lot further than that. Like I can, you know, intellectualize and philosophize on like the merits of that, but it, it's the driving force of just like, [00:11:00] cool, I'm going to take this stuff I experience and make it semi-permanent, permanent. , um, you know, which I've done a pretty bad job of doing, cuz most of it is still just digital.

And I think we've all, over the last few years, people are starting to come to terms of how temporary digital stuff is, like, how it decays and just falls apart. Uh, so you need to find other ways to, to make it more permanent. But, uh, that, that's why I create, uh, more than anything. I like creating a lot. Uh, I have found a lot more value beyond that, but the core is just, yeah, that immortality, or at least outliving myself.

I think that's actually

Lisette Alvarez: something that, um, I believe it's George Orwell who wrote out, I Can't, no, it wasn't Georgia. Well, somebody else very prestigious, uh, storyteller from like, you know, the early 19 hundreds. Um, who said something to the effect of like, [00:12:00] there's only, um, a handful of reasons of why people write.

And one was. Achieve immortality. One was like revenge or out of spite . Mm-hmm. for money. Um, yeah. Uh, and I can't remember some of the other, but yeah. Yeah. Like, I think that's, that's appropriate. Um, and at the same time I also, uh, I'm glad that it's also something that reaches it's immortality and in storytelling.

I think it's also, it reaches other people. It lasts beyond you because it's in other people now.

Ester Ellis: Well, and that's kind of the secondary thing is helping other people achieve a longer lifespan. Just through the things I tend to write about. It's like, these are stories that I haven't experienced and that I wish I had when I was younger.

So let me try to give those to people who are younger now and maybe they can understand themselves better, uh, get help if they need it, [00:13:00] um, and live a more fulfilling life. So, yeah, just, just the net. Trying to net increase people's lifespan. That's the goal. , I'm a person of generally simple motivations. I think those are the

Lisette Alvarez: best ones.

Right. And this is actually something I kind of wanna talk for the, for the next question, which is, uh, can, can you describe a mentor or a person, and I know this is an overused term, but like a role model who you felt has helped you become a better storyteller? What was like a surprising lesson you got from

Ester Ellis: them?

Oh God. So an issue with me is my life has had a, uh, lack of mentors. I can now identify a couple that I've had, um, in like editing for example. But, ooh, what's a, and maybe that's its own lesson, because I've always been on. The older end of age [00:14:00] groups. Um, and I've always been someone who has like, respect, but on the outside of a thing, like I'm never quite on the inside or when I am in leadership roles, it's because I was useful for that role, not because I was necessarily pursuing that role.

And as a result, I, I didn't, I was usually giving advice. I didn't have a lot of people giving me advice outside of stories. And maybe that's it. Maybe my mentors was, I would find stories, someone who is reaching some high, and I would just kind of try to chase that. Um, but I will say my, the producer of my first show, Gretchen Schreiber, who gave me a, uh, I didn't know what a producer was.

I was not planning on writing Station Blue. I was planning on improvising it. Um, and she gave me what I can only describe as a back alley, uh, MFA screenwriting course over a year. In which I would bring her scripts and she would tear them to [00:15:00] pieces and circle like the two lines she thought would, should be kept.

And that worked out well for me, . Um, but she gave me a, a writing book, which is the part, part of the reason I don't like writing books is because she gave me the one that has given me everything I've needed, which is how to build a great screenplay. Um, and I think God funny that this is the hardest question for me to answer.

I think my main lesson from having like mentor figures now is that if I have a question, I ask myself what they will probably tell me or do to answer that question. And then I will go do that first and like 19 times out of 20, I then don't need to ask them the. . Which is why I think that people who employ me like employing me, cuz I don't bother them much.

And when I do, it's generally well thought out.

Lisette Alvarez: I kind of wanna follow up on that. Uh, why do you think [00:16:00] that mode is a really good lesson for a storyteller?

Ester Ellis: For as far as pursuing your own thing, right? And trying to answer those questions. I practically for storytelling, that's something you're just doing in writing anyways. You're like, how is this chara? What, what is a problem and how is a character gonna solve it? Or how is a figure gonna solve it? It is a pretty common like, type of storytelling.

I don't know if it's universal, but it feels like to an extent, it probably is. Um, and doing that with yourself, I always try to bake in like my experience writing into the writing itself too. Like, where am I at, what am I struggling with? I, I've, it's not even done on purpose. Like you heard the story I just told.

I was not consciously following, okay, I'm gonna do a beginning, middle end, et cetera, et cetera. But I knew if I just regurgitated this thing and I tried to keep it honest and tried to keep to an instinct, you could probably go back [00:17:00] and pick it apart. And it's like, all right, this is pretty evident of the way I tell stories, which is do a bunch of stuff, analyze them later, figure out what I did on accident.

Such as like, I have figured out that all of my stories are about the main character being rejected by God and becoming a monster, right? And my stories don't all seem like they're not the same. And yet I look at all of them, I'm like, oh, this is a theme in literally all of my work. I didn't do that on purpose.

Um, and so in trying to pursue things in a very animal way, in a very, I'm not going to think about this. I'm just going to try to live this really hard. Um, y you tend to get there and it tends to then reflect who you are. . And then in theory, if you're writing for some reason is studying in classes later, they, you know, have an easier thing for a teacher to give them essay assignments on of like, oh, what are the themes of this, [00:18:00] this writer?

It's like, yeah, they're there.

Lisette Alvarez: I would love to eventually get to a point where I have, um, a study guide at the end of my work, right? Mm-hmm. , because I, I feel like I do that already to my work too, is then like, reflect saying, wow, where, where did that come from? , the author truly is dead. Yes. Because I don't remember writing about that.

Um mm-hmm. . But yeah, no, I, I think that's a really good point. And it is something that, uh, I find interesting too, as someone who also has struggled with. the fact that I have not had a, a formal storytelling mentor at most like, or mentor. I've had a very similar experience, and I just talked about this with my sister, that, um, I didn't really have really good managers or mentor like [00:19:00] figures throughout most of my professional life up till now.

And that has more or less taught me what I would've wanted and that I then share with other people. I think there's something to that. Yes. Um,

Ester Ellis: I, I try to give people shortcuts a lot. Yes. At this point I was just like, yeah, here's all the lessons I've learned. Uh, just you can have them,

Lisette Alvarez: like, it doesn't have to be a struggle for everybody.

It really. ,

Ester Ellis: right? But then there's value in this strategy. Yes. And this, this gets into kind of a deterministic worldview of everybody is on their path and everybody gets where they need to go, the way they need to go. And I think people can like, help add or take away pain. Um, and so, you know, I, I definitely try to help out where I can, but the fact that my best writing lessons came from someone essentially beating me up.

Uh, like it's, it wasn't, here's how you write, it's bring me writing and then I'm gonna [00:20:00] tear it apart. And I, I learned really well from that. Like, I think that would be really bad for some people, but it worked out great for me. Um, and same thing with like, I would, I would call Freddy Wong a mentor. Uh, he's the guy I work for in Dungeons and Daddies, just cuz this guy, he has a ton of insights on creating online.

I was not familiar with his history when I first started working for him. I just knew him as like my friend's bass player. Um, but the way he has like, given me work is just like, all right, here's all the notes. Here's how you fix it. And then I would go and do that until I could, you know, he, he doesn't give me a lot of notes these days cuz generally I'm taking all the notes he's given me in the past and I've learned like, what are we trying to do here?

What is a good episode sound like? And that's what I'm pursuing, right? It's not, oh, he told me to cut out ums. It's, why are we cutting out ums? Because if I know why I'm cutting out an, um, I can probably know like, oh, there's other

things I should probably remove that aren't literally an, um, but have the same role as an, um,

Lisette Alvarez: would you[00:21:00]

Um, and so, and like how you said, um, right after, um, uh, for example, what would you actually constitute in that, in that context? What also functions as an.

Ester Ellis: people. So an um, is a placeholder generally when we're speaking and it's something that we filter out when we're speaking to each other, which is why we need to edit them. Like my general goal when I'm editing down a show is how do I create the experience you think you're having when you're having a conversation with another person, right?

There's a reason a lot of people hate hearing themselves recorded. It's not just their voice, it is the way they're speaking. They're like, I thought I was more eloquent than that. And you are more eloquent than that cuz you have two complex brains interacting with each other and they know what to filter out, what to add context to, right?

There's value in all of this, but you are creating the experience people think they're having because now that you have like earbuds in or speakers that does [00:22:00] change the experience. And things that normally you'd filter out with another human are now irritating. Uh, and so people, everybody has their own tendencies, uh, with.

a lot of folks, it's like, okay, you have a sentence in which you're figuring out what you're gonna say, and then you have a sentence where you start saying it, and then you have a sentence where you actually nail what you're trying to say. I just cut the first two sentences. Like, you don't need that, but that comes to pursuing a goal, right?

In my case, I'm trying to pursue the purest, most effective version of what this is. Um, and maybe that's where it go, goes back to like my experiences with mentorship of people just like mentally, uh, beating up on what I'm trying to do and me learning through that is because you're just like, what's effective?

Right? What script do I hand this person that's no longer marked up in red? Uh, and like I said, doesn't work for everyone. Uh, I, I've done a lot of long distance [00:23:00] backpacking and I feel like that's ultimately where I kind of got the core of this lesson was in, in hiking the Pacific Crest Trail, which is a Mexico to Canada Trail along the mountain ranges of the.

Western side of the United States, um, is, it's just like you need to be effective. Like there aren't a lot of rules you need to get from this town to that town before you run out of food and die. But it doesn't really matter like how you get there. But if you take a wrong, if you're looking for water, right, you're out of water, water's a mile away, you take a wrong turn, you've gone five miles now water is, you know, 11 miles away from what you originally thought.

You wanna sit down and quit and have a helicopter grab you and hit the reset button on your video game. Except for that doesn't work. And even if you're demoralized and you want to just sit there and perish, like perishing takes a long time. And at that point you might as well just walk to water, which is what you do.

And it sucks. But when you do that over a six [00:24:00] month period, you're just like, well, I gotta live. Um, and coming back from that, I think doing that in kind of an extreme environment for six months straight. just baked that into the rest of my living and definitely my storytelling. Cuz when I look at my stories, I'm like, what am I trying to say with this?

Is this effective? Like, is this doing it? Yes or no? Uh, it's rather binary

Lisette Alvarez: or is it, you know, taking you off to a trail where you feel like you just

Ester Ellis: wanna quit. Right. And even that had its own valuable lesson, but it's like, am I trying to teach that lesson? Right. Is that something I'm trying to do? ?

Lisette Alvarez: Yeah. No, I think that's a really good point.

And you know, I, I've, I think all storytellers at some point have that moment of, uh, of really doubting their abilities Oh yeah. As storytellers. I, I, I want you to , bring up a time where it was [00:25:00] really, um, apparent that you are doubting your ability as a storyteller and, and what was that like for

Ester Ellis: you? Yeah.

This week. I've been writing this mini-series. I started it over a year ago. Uh, this is for the goblet wire and for the uninitiated, the goblet wire. It's a surreal micro fiction podcast. Episodes are about five minutes long, which means scripts are between 600 and 900 words, which a lot of people can write in one sitting.

Uh, I am not a lot of people, partly because it's like I need, you know, these themes and I, I, it's, I I put so much work into it, and so I started this thing like a year ago, but then I worked on other episodes. I made a lot of other stuff. But coming back to the miniseries, I've been trying to work on it for six months.

Like, if you go back through my planners, it's a persistent thing, and every time I, I'll write something, I'm like, this is trash. This is, this isn't working, this isn't doing what I want it to do, and I'd finally, you know, get to another script. It, it, [00:26:00] it wasn't valuable for me. Right. Ultimately, yeah. Light living is valuable and there are lessons I can take away here, which I'm trying to impart.

Now, uh, but in those six months, like I would write a episode as like, okay, this is fine, but I have like six episodes to tell this story. Like I have 6,000 words to tell this story, which is not a lot. Um, is this working right? And then I would write the next thing and write the next thing. And finally this last week, I just like rewrote one of the scripts and wrote the last two scripts I needed and then looked through all of them and is like, no, it's fine.

Actually, those scripts I wrote six months ago work, I just needed the supporting elements to it. Like I needed to keep going. Uh, but I was just so out of the habit of writing cuz I had been so caught up in like sound design and other elements of production that I, I wasn't in the habit. And so that, that was one I've just constantly been like, uh, do I even make this mini-series?

Like other people are making good episodes. The show will [00:27:00] persist without my contributions. But at the same time, like I have a role in that show. Because I was the initial person who like created it to show people what kind of things can the show be so that when other writers step in, they're like, oh, I didn't know you could do that, or, I didn't know you could go that far.

It's like, I, I'm not trying to write the best episodes of Goblet Wire. I'm trying to write maps so that people can then go write the best episodes of the Goblet Wire. But yeah, no, I, that, that one was constantly, I'd look at it and be like, nah, this is, this is, this is not working. This is not good. This is not accomplishing what I'm trying to do.

And I mean, and that goes back from the beginning. That was an early lesson I learned in creating was I almost deleted the whole station Blue Feed every episode until episode five. At that point, I felt like it would be cruel and mean, um, and make me a bad person to delete the show and disappear off the internet.

But up until then, every every week I was [00:28:00] like, I could disappear. Like only like 500 people will know. and they've got their own lives, right? They're not gonna think about me. Only 500 people,

Lisette Alvarez: right? That, you know, how, how many, how, how many seats in a, in and how many movie theaters

Ester Ellis: that fits. I do because I came from the theater, which is why I was like, cool, this is, you know, multiple sold out showings.

But at the same time, I've seen a lot of plays, and if some of those plays didn't happen, my life would've continued. That

Lisette Alvarez: is fair. And that's something actually, I, I want to explore more because there are, um, truisms about storytelling that I think everybody's heard, everybody's listened to, which is, um, , I think you kind of nailed one that, you know, people don't like to think about, which is that there are just some stories out there that aren't impactful for some people or like, or even for a majority of people that listen to 'em,

Ester Ellis: avatar [00:29:00] to So mad.

I don't, let's not, I I know that's like, just, I know. I just gave you a big piece of bait. We don't need to take it. Oh, it's, it's, it's such fish. But

Lisette Alvarez: that, but, but actually what I, I, I, I, because I think this is actually something that can help lunch. The bait can be, uh, for a larger fish, I,

Ester Ellis: that story didn't need to be told is my argument.

Yes. That's my argument. So

Lisette Alvarez: I actually wanna talk about the, this particular. instinct to have true, especially in a storyteller's ways to, to kind of the, the truism of like, all stories matter. There's always something of use or value in stories. Um, that's one thing that like, you know, we can always kind of confront the alternative, which is what if they're, they don't.

But I also wanna give you an opportunity to answer this particular question in any way you feel that you see that you, you, you see fit, you [00:30:00] feel fit to answer. I, I am mal apro zone, right? I dunno. . Yeah. Um, but

Ester Ellis: what are you see, this is, this is communication, right? We are communicating effectively, even if we're not using the words our teachers would've wanted us

Lisette Alvarez: to use.

Yes. Uh, and, but you totally get the vibe. Um, that is, most of stories are just vibes, uh, . But my question is, what are you seeing in the culture? regarding storytelling that you feel not enough people or no one is talking about. Why do you think no one talks about this particular subject and what are you planning to

Ester Ellis: do about it?

That's interesting. So I have like literal stuff of when I got in, I was like, I want a story that reflects bipolar disorder even a little bit. Um, at the same time, me, uh, being a white person in progressive spaces who entered this space, uh, [00:31:00] mask presenting and is trans, you know, trans, I, I came from the most privileged possible like seed you can come from in this country at least.

And what you learn in that is to listen and that if you think something doesn't exist, it probably does and you just need to go look for. And so because of that training I, or that conditioning, like I usually assume if something's missing that I'm just not seeing it, that someone is in fact making that.

Um, but as far as storytelling as a whole, I've been really happy with post quarantine. I won't say post pandemic, but I will say post quarantine storytelling, like some of the best movies and TV shows I've seen in my life have come out in the last year and a half. Um, I think books are gonna be really incredible in the next like two or three years.

I, I think it forced a lot of people to confront a lot of things and the things that kind of survived through that, that are getting out are good. Um, and so [00:32:00] I'm very pleased with that. And even we're getting to a point with, uh, things that I want critiqued in society or times where like, the reason I have beef with avatar too, outside of like a lot of superficial elements is just.

This story's theming is in conflict with how it was made. Who it was made by. Like what is it it's saying and or what it thinks it's saying and what it is saying are in conflict, right? If it was you, right? If someone showed me a fascist movie and it was fascist through and through, I'm like, I can at least say that this story is what you wanted it to be.

Even if I fundamentally disagree with what it is doing, I get bothered by a movie, by avatar cuz I'm like, this is, this soul is broken, this soul is in the wrong body, the body's in the wrong clothes and that whole package is in the wrong city. Like there's a way, right? If you want to go generic, we [00:33:00] could have gone pure, generic and that would've at least felt right to me.

Cuz you, you said a lot storytelling is vibes. Um, and that's generally what I'm looking for in stories. Like is this story. A pure expression of an idea from production to the other end, which isn't required. Like I think we can all think of, uh, stories that have had great effects of us, and then we learn like, oh, the way this is being made, it is, does not line up with like my ethics.

Right? Um, but my favorite things, it's, it's just like when that from the seed all the way to the final tree, like it lines up, uh, as far as like literal stuff that I would like to see covered. Um, and people are working on these stories, just any kind of like life perspectives in general. I would like obviously to get to a place where we get through some of our core societal biases.

And when I say our, I mean that in like the most general [00:34:00] possible way because I, I, we found, I found for example, like South Korean films are hitting in the United States really hard because they're telling stories we want to tell but aren't allowed to tell. Uh, because of, you know, a lot of our stores over here, it's like, all right, we won't want to rant a rant about the, uh, state of our philosophies and economies, except for we're programmed not to do that in a way where, like over in South Korea, they don't even ha they don't have the core, they just have like the result.

And so if they're gonna criticize a system, there's no reason not to criticize that system. I just want to see more of that, like from all over. Like, I wanna understand people, I wanna understand other cultures and other perspectives that I don't currently understand, and I want people not to be in the way of telling those stories so that I can better understand and have empathy for more perspectives around the world.

Lisette Alvarez: Reduced creativity by corporate business marketing committee . [00:35:00]

Ester Ellis: Yeah. And shout out to the people who are using that corporate funding, uh, to create ultimate example, Marvel Cinematic Universe. Which like, I'm a, as a human, a glutton for novelty and the human race creating movies in the first place is bananas.

If we look at it on like thousands of year scale and then creating like 30 movies that I'll have to link up and that keep going, that's fa even if it's not valuable. That's fascinating to me and I want to see how far it can go. Uh, but it is, you know, the creators who are making these, who I do think are human beings with like specific perspectives and things they want to say are increasingly creating villains that you're like, that's not a villain.

That guy like knows what he's talking about. That's just a radical. And we could use some radical ideology right now. Uh, and also the hero ultimately agrees with them. And all of these movies are starting to tell us, like, and this isn't me, you know, talking generally, this is what the movies are telling us that we need to [00:36:00] fight.

Specifically the United States government. ,

Lisette Alvarez: I've seen, if you haven't watched Black Panther too,

Ester Ellis: Black Panther. That's like so many of these Falcon and Winter Soldier, all of these stories are telling us they've taught us over 30 movies what a bad guy is, right? Um, and they've taught us what different perspectives are.

Um, and all of those are pointing, in this case to the United States government and Black Panther, you know, set it out right a little bit more, but it told it, the characters who are baddies in the US government were created by other creators in this. It's not like they brought it forward for this movie.

And so that's me going back to what I was, uh, raving about before on like consistent storytelling. It's like, cool, right now, this is where this is going. Right? The corporate overlords have learned that when you let a director follow their vision and do something unique, such as like in this case, Thor, Ragner, rock, um, [00:37:00] people like it and they'll keep watching your movies.

So we're gonna give more directors. The power. And there's been times with like the eternals where that, I think, I would argue the Eternals is a good contribution to the M C U, but people didn't like it cuz it was melodramatic. But that's what that director does. Um, and so it, you, you can see how it's like, all right, you still have to kind of stay in the lane or people are gonna get mad.

At the same time, they've given these creators a bit more freedom, but that with that freedom, they are, you know, talking about important issues. And with those important issues, it's like cool. And because it is a story where you have good guys and bad guys and you have systems that are now being identified as

bad guys, it's like eventually you're gonna have to fight these systems and you're not going to do it.

And so there's going to be a point in the next five years where we look at. And we're like, this does not, this is not thematically consistent, right? This is not, the story you're telling is no longer working because Disney's not gonna let the Hulk go smash the Disney [00:38:00] Corporation. Listen. So I

Lisette Alvarez: would, this is taking me on a completely separate path, but um, I'm gonna be trying to keep this interview down to, uh, under an hour, but you make me want to rant.

Good luck with me. You make me wanna rant about what happened with Supernatural. Cuz that's exactly what happened with Supernatural is that they had really, really strong themes and then they just didn't follow through. I think personally, this has to do with courage in storytelling. Right. Um, so on that note, you know, all these kind of, um, bigger stories that are happening and obviously I think you also mentioned at uh, how, um, when you were talking about.

these books that you were reading too about good storytelling. What, what makes you feel like you've done your job as a [00:39:00] storyteller at this

Ester Ellis: point? Uh, I mean, first of all, when I tell the story, because in our case, we're working in the medium of new media, right? We're creating lar distributing via the internet, um, communicating with people via the internet.

We get immediate reactions when we put something up. We have fan bases and enemies and friends and whatnot. Um, and so that, that's a very specific way. And we're in still in the first, what, like 10, 15 years of this format. And so there still aren't rules, like we're learning rules, but the first thing is just putting it out in the first place is a good thing to do.

And I won't put something out until I've truly, uh, spilled my guts and put everything into it. You know, I've thought of like the prospect of remastering my first season because I, I know a lot more now, but the first season is listenable. Right. If it was at the point where like [00:40:00] the quality, you couldn't listen to it because I had messed up the audio, that would be different.

But it's like you can still listen to this. And I do think this is a reflection of who I was and what I was capable of at the time. As will be season two, as will be season three. And because that's what this story is about, I think that's the most

authentic way for this story to exist, is keeping the warts of the learning process throughout.

Um, like I think it will be better than if season one sounds shinier, right? And I guess like the reason people like this story as it is, I might be able to capture more people if it sounded shinier. , but do I need those people? Right? Is are those things I need to capture? Um, and the answer is no. Everybody has a different goal when they're producing works, especially in new media.

And to an extent it is going to be if you are distributing that way and [00:41:00] not just like hitting, putting it on a feed and then ignoring it. Like there is a point of like reputation and personality and stuff that goes with it. And if you're good at leveraging those things, you will probably be more successful.

Like I would argue you are pretty good at leveraging those things. I would argue I'm pretty good at leveraging those things. Um, there, there's, and you don't need to do that, right? There's people where their teams are really good and people like the idea of that team working together, that business working together.

Uh, so there's, there's plenty of paths to Rome. That's just the path we are on. Is like solo creator, making a thing, bringing on other people eventually. So that's like, for me, what I've told there is an element of like, reaction that's good, that will tell you if it's working or not, but also like enough people are gonna like your story.

So for me, the primary goal is just to make it and make it to my [00:42:00] standard. And I'm probably pickier than most of the listeners. I'm trying to get to listen to it. And so if it can get by me, it will probably be fine. Um, granted, I'm, I'm slightly unusual in the like, creating for online way. Like, I, I don't care about downloads anymore because I have so smashed my early download goals.

Th they're just, you know, collapsed in the ground by like, you know, I was like, okay, if I make this and I can get like 10,000 downloads, Which at the time would equi be like the equivalent of like 2000 listeners. Like, that's more audience than I would have in an entire run of a large play when I was in college.

So it was like that, that's enough. People have heard this story, you know, heard that story. And that was happening when I was like halfway through my show. Now, if I was still sitting at making the show and I had like 10 people had listened to it, would I still think that? I don't know. And that's, it's a privileged perspective.[00:43:00]

Um, but at the same time, there is limit. And I, I think a pitfall of creating online in particular is this idea of infinite growth of like, it always has to be getting more, it always has

Lisette Alvarez: to be That's very capitalist thinking. .

Ester Ellis: Yeah. And it's, it's like, why? Right. You know, if you, I'm more of the like, oh, if an old man tells me a story around a campfire and it changes my life, I don't care if he ever tells that story again.

Like, that story was worth being told. Um, and in this case, it's like, what, what, who am I trying to reach? Like what are my goals here? And my goals are not infinite growth, right? I've already exceeded any audience size. Like enough people have heard this story where I am more and more focused on the story itself.

Not that I wasn't before, but I've just doubled down on like, how do I want to tell this? Um, like with Goblet Wire, I, I'm letting that one spread word of mouth, right? And I'm [00:44:00] asking people to share it, but at the same time, I'm not like actively pursuing a gigantic audience because like I've also seen Dungeons and Daddies gets more downloads in a month than like most top audio dramas will get in a year combined.

And what does it do for us? How does that change our lives? Sure. It, it brings money in so that the show can continue to be made in a way where it's my job. But beyond that, it's like now that people are still living, they're still interesting in, in interested in creating. So I think I've seen enough people at different stages, right?

I, I've talked to people who are like writers on the top, best of top video games and the things they struggle with in their life. And then I've seen the people who are working a retail job making an audio drama in all of their spare time and what they're struggling with. And I was like, there's the, the grass is not greener, like, engaged with the process fully where you are at because that's how you're gonna tell the [00:45:00] both best story.

And also like making money as, as I've seen with like creators who like make enough money to just. That's better than having to work a retail job. You know, I'm not gonna romanticize like my, where I came from in storytelling, but I was still able to tell the story while like working a retail job, right.

While working at bookstores. Um, you're gonna get there and then you're still gonna have problems, right? You're still gonna have life problems. And so like fully engage with it where you're at, which is generally what I try to do. And I think if you become more successful, it's like, try not to become too out of touch.

Yeah. Because that can happen too. And then that just kind of sucks, but that's gonna come with its own consequences, right? People will be less engaged with your work. Um, voila. Wave in my hand in an audio format. Before

Lisette Alvarez: we started recording, we were talking about, um, creators in kind of our realm of peers.

And when we [00:46:00] started doing audio drama, A few instances when people are out of touch of people who are trying to come up and come into audio drama that there's, there is a kind of river or the out of touchness comes from not being very clear of where you are. Yeah. Right.

Ester Ellis: And that's easy too because chances are, if you're a well-known podcaster, uh, you still have a day job.

Right? Right. You still are in a similar position as you were before, but that's not the case to a new person coming, you know, onto the street who has 50 people following their show. And every comment is like something they will remember for the entire month in which that comment was made. Um, you are still further along with, it's like, recognize where you are.

That's like me. I. Am not. So I like to try to make things and get them out on my own as much as possible. [00:47:00] Like I've never, I, I don't bring like celebrity voice actors on, for example, cuz it's like, I want you to want to work with these voice actors cuz they were on my show and you liked them there. I don't want you to come to this show because of this voice actor.

And that's just my own scruple, right? It, it is not necessary. That's just how I prefer to create. At the same time, working on a massive show like that comes with its own reputation that has gotten me into rooms where people like, oh, I, you know, you've made this thing that's neat. And I was like, this thing is like, I really love this show.

This is the least of what I make. Right? This is like, this does definitely have like my art artistic ideals in it. Um, and I'm very happy to work with that team, but I'm like, I didn't invent this. Like, and I put way more agony and thought

into like the other things that I'm making. And so it would be irresponsible of me to pretend that there's not a reputation or clout that comes with working on that show [00:48:00] when it's given to me.

Right. I, it's not something I think about on the day, but if someone's like, Hey, you work on this, I really like it. It's like, cool that I'm glad you like it. Like I, I can, you know, tell you that the team who makes it, they're great people, uh, which is a nice thing to know in the age of internet and learning that many of our free favorite creators are not great people.

Lisette Alvarez: Yeah. No, no. Like there, there's milkshake, ducks in every industry. ,

Ester Ellis: right? And at the same time, it's, if people are like, oh, if I could only work on a show like that, I'm like, that's not gonna solve your problems, and it's definitely not gonna make you a better creator. Um, and it depends on your goals, right?

Some people just want as many audience members as possible, but it's like, what is, you know, be, I'm in, I live in Los Angeles, and if you have 10,000 downloads on your podcast, you can get your foot in so many doors. And in audio drama it is work. But getting 10,000 downloads is very doable. Like there is, there's a big community you can tap into them.

Retention rate in audio drama is high. After your [00:49:00] like third episode, um, you can achieve that. And for most, like for your parents, there's probably no, and this goes back to a trail lesson. There's no difference between 10,000 and a hundred thousand, right? There is like in the same way where people react the same way to me, hiking the Pacific Crest Trail, which is two and a half thousand miles to hiking the John Muir Trail, which is 200 miles.

If you hike more than 50 miles, that is more than most people have ever considered walking. And the rest is nonsense, right? It's just a bigger number. Um, so if it's a matter of like, okay, is this gonna open doors? It's just like if you can get people to listen to your thing, most people can't get people to listen to their podcasts cuz they're making non-fiction podcasts.

And while the audience is. way larger. It is hard to capture them. Um, unless you

Lisette Alvarez: have, so, eh, , unless you

Ester Ellis: have, maybe that's where the celebrity stuff comes in. Right? I dunno. There was just

Lisette Alvarez: a Vulture article that actually my dad sent me that was a, that [00:50:00] just came out about the state of, uh, the state of podcasts in 2023.

And it's kind of a downer cuz it talks about, you know, podcasting might re like there might be, you know, reactions to the recession and uh, but it's funny cuz it, they clearly pulled, um, quotes on some people with audio drama stuff. So on on, on kind of the, the perspective of people don't want to have celebrity celebrities carrying podcasts and it's only on their name alone that the podcasts or the, the stories carried.

Which I think makes sense. And I think that also kind of comes back to what we were talking about earlier about. What, good, good stories, at least, I don't know, in my opinion. And I think the, my opinion agrees with yours that good stories do what they set out, do what they, what, what a type of good story does, what it sets out to do.

Mm-hmm. . Yeah. [00:51:00]

Ester Ellis: It's effective. It's an effective story. You want, you want to tell an effective story, and that's usually where I start, is forget structure, forget rules. Right. Is this effective? Will this accomplish your goal? The rules and stuff can be very good and a lot of times if you're telling an effective story, you are following the rules whether or not you know it.

Um, but yeah, like are, are you doing this because I'm, I don't, I I look at, for example, Travis Vof, who is the sounds, you know, one half of Fullen scholar. Makes White vault and liberty and Dark dice. They got Jeff Goldblum on Dark Dice. I was like, couldn't happen to a nicer person. All of a sudden, dark Dice is getting all of this attention from news outlets and whatnot who just need clicks.

Um, and that's great, right? Jeff Goldblum is not what I like about Dark Dice and people, while Dark Dice is like a little [00:52:00] more relevant now, most of the relevance of Dark Dice came from the hard work and storytelling they had already done. Jeff Goldblum brought in people who would not have seen it otherwise.

Um, and that's kind of my thing. It's like I don't want to make a show cuz I look at like, you know, let's look at some shows with like celebrity talent. Q Code shows people who like things that sound good like Q Code shows, um, and

people are going, are getting increasingly annoyed with Q Code because the stories don't end because.

Um, you know, shout out to the community relations manager at Q Code. You work hard. I appreciate you. Even if we've gotten in arguments and the argument isn't about the attention, it's about like the result. It's just like your reputation is that you are a TV show farm. At the same time, it would be foolish, in my opinion, for any indie audio drama person to think that the people making these cue code shows are these huge celebrity, right?

They're just, they're just as like indie, scrappy [00:53:00] creator as you are. They just went the route of cue code where you went the route of like get making a Twitter profile and a website. Yeah, no, this was

Lisette Alvarez: brought, this was also brought up in this Vulture article and I'll also put the Vulture article in the show notes cuz I think it's also really useful.

Um, which is about the, uh, IP farming of podcasts,

Ester Ellis: the state of ip and with an IP farm. An IP farm that's not, An authentic way of telling stories. However, many of the people providing stories to it are people who are just like you and have an authentic story to tell. It's just like, how much is that of that's gonna survive?

I don't want any story that I put value in. I want to make myself, because Q Code can say there's not a budget for season two. And also like we own the show. So like that's it. And that's fi like I'm not a Q Code hater, even if I'm waiting for them to impress me with the [00:54:00] stories, uh, or with with the production because I like, I don't know, I hear things that are too clean and I'm like, this is turning my brain off.

Like you've divorced me from the human element that I like here, which is not a deal breaker. It's just now you have to work harder. Versus if it's someone in a closet who's telling a really good story. And I'm not only connected to the story, but the storyteller because I know they're in a closet and I know like what they're making this under.

If you're coming at it, you know, with a six figure budget, which like we should all have six figure budgets. Um, but that's not realistic for now. for now. Now it's, let's be real. It's, and that and an advantage of being indie, right? Yeah. Is with the recession, it's like cool, what does that matter? As if you could put food on your own table.

You weren't making money anyways. This was back, back when I was first, uh, before I was doing sound design full-time, um, working at bookstores as a night buddy Joe, and we had several friends who had [00:55:00] been laid off from jobs that to us, made a lot of money. Um, and these people, it ruined their lives for like the six to 12 months that they had to find a new job.

Whereas for us, we're like, man, if I get fired I can just go to literally any other store cuz I'm paid so little and that's not great. But at the same time it's like, oh, it is ver if you know how to make stuff and you're making, you know, Minimum wage. You are like, what can stop you outside of, you know, the crushing weight of the rest of life?

But chances are you're better at like handling that than most people. That's the thing with any creating, right? If you're making a show that requires a six figure budget, um, a lot can stop that. If you're making a show that you, you pull out nickels from your, your couch, like, it's really difficult to stop you from telling that story.

And I think that comes down to the question of like, are you trying to sell a show? Are you trying to tell a complete story? Like if you're trying to sell, tell a complete story. Don't sell it to [00:56:00] someone cuz they can just cancel it. No kidding. Communicate your own. Yeah. If you're just trying to work as a writer, it's like, yeah, sell everything.

Just like we all have a lot of ideas, like make those ideas and sell.

Lisette Alvarez: Yeah. And that's something that, I mean, that's something I'm al also thinking about as a storyteller, as someone who has also been in contact with, you know, uh, people from across the levels of this industry. Right. And it's something I've been really using that, and I don't, I don't have any answers to, to be perfectly honest of, um, part of me, you know, there's the one side is just get your bag however you need to.

Mm-hmm. . And then the other side is, uh, the way in which people are trying to get their bag is not sustainable. . Right. Or

Ester Ellis: re or recognize that, you know, and, and I'm a terrible person to talk to about this cuz like, I lived a pretty good, happy life. On minimum, I've been poor my whole life. Uh, I now have a career for the first.[00:57:00]

And it's great because my lifestyle has not changed that much. It's like, oh yeah, money solves so many problems. I can go to the doctor now. I haven't been to

the doctor in 10 years. Like I can do stuff with transitioning that I could not do before and that's great and I don't want to give it back at the same time I got here.

Like I getting knocked down a peg again like would suck, but it would not stop the production flow of what I was trying to do. Cuz I was just used to like living off of very little, um, and making from that. And that's like that. A lot of my stories involve that too. And that's not me saying rags to riches.

That's me saying like, if, if you can operate on rags, like very little can stop. Outside of the crushing weight of like existing Right. But th that this gets into the general, like you say something on the internet, someone can clip it and like go off and that they're welcome to do that. Uh, another thing I like about being an indie creator is you're rarely relevant enough for the f [00:58:00] people to put the effort into like, taking pot shots at you that like waste your time.

Yeah. Generally if someone's coming at you, like hopefully there, there's a good reason for it. And I've had people come at me for like good reasons and others, and that gets into a whole other thing of like accountability existing online and like discern. Right. Right. Because accountability is very important.

Yeah. Right. I would not be here without accountability in a lot of people teaching me

Lisette Alvarez: important lessons, but there's also a difference of who actually is warranted to hold you accountable versus, you know,

Ester Ellis: exactly. Right. And who's wasting your time. Mm-hmm. , you know, and I, and that comes down to, you know, one of my big pieces of internet advice is like, get your core group.

Before you have the opportunity to like become famous or anything because it, the more you are online, the the more you're a big thing online. And the more you get to the point from like criticism coming from a hundreds to thousands to 10 thousands, I have observed that it gets more and more difficult to tell good criticism from bad.

[00:59:00] And you're more likely to throw them all out because you also have a human brain and you probably have some trauma and like this is probably causing a trauma response and yada, it's like you need to get people who you trust early on so that later on you can be like, am I out of touch? And they be like, yeah, why did you do that?

You are out of touch. Or they can be like, get off Twitter, stop listening to randos. No, and

Lisette Alvarez: and I think that's something any, so I think part of what I've understood as being a storyteller out in the world telling stories to other people is that there is a, um, tension, conflict and relationship between the storyteller and those who are listening.

And I think as a storyteller, I always want to be cognizant of that relationship because I think it does, it does change, it moves. And the only thing I can truly control is how I respond in that relationship. [01:00:00]

Ester Ellis: Yes. You control your platform, you control what is on your Twitter or your social media page, right?

You. And we're living in a world where likes and retweets and all of that brings visibility to that. Like you control what you bring visibility to. Yep. And that's important. Other people can't compel you to do that. Other people can't like go into your feed and say, we voted and your feed doesn't get to exist anymore.

And that comes with the responsibility, right. To grow and be responsible as a human being and to listen to others. And also, To not, you know, it, it's tricky. One day there will be classes on this. It's not, I don't like it when people call things Wild Wests ,

Lisette Alvarez: um, because the Wild West was horrific .

Ester Ellis: And it's just such a, it's a very limited perspective, right?

There's, there's other, there's other better, uh, connections throughout the world at this. You know, at the same time, we are learning lessons right now [01:01:00] that will become rules and laws later, right? There will be a day when you're taking your how to create online class. And they're like, this is how you create boundaries with an audience.

Like, my first time learning that was, I had a $5 patron who would DM me every day and I was like, this person's giving me $5. That's huge. That's like a large, um, you know, that's a large amount of my Patreon budget that covers a third of my hosting fees for the month. Um, also they connected with my story.

They relate to it. also, they seem to need help that I can't offer them. , you're not qualified to. Uh, and, and I feel like a jerk for like not talking to them, but then I

put it under the thing of like, wait, you giving me $5 does not entitle you to my time. Not in a mean way, right? In just a, like, if someone came up to you on the street and said, Hey, I'm gonna hand you $5 and I'm gonna talk to you and you have to listen to me.

As long as you think that $5 is like [01:02:00] worth this time in your day, that's not going to equal like a whole relationship online. And it's just easier to create those boundaries from the get-go. Like in my case, in my discord, I have like, don't DM people without permission. Um, don't do it because like we all have li chances are, especially if you're like in your twenties or thirties, you probably already have the people you need to talk to in a day to day.

And you need to maintain those relationships. And if you're creating, like you probably have crews and stuff that you need to talk to, like you do have a limited amount of time and a little limited amount of head space in which you like engage. And if people like, they want to talk to you because you created something you need to keep creating.

Right. And that's, I think the easiest way for me to do it is be like, Hey, I need to keep making this thing if I talk to everybody who wanted to talk to me about it, which I do. Like, I like talking to people about these things a lot, but like there, there's a limit. You, you don't want that to derail you from making in the first place.

Like [01:03:00] that's why these people want to talk to

Lisette Alvarez: you. Yeah. No, that's, uh, something I've been thinking about too is figuring out what my storytelling team and if you, uh, I, I, I will, uh, you know, let like show my hand a little bit in this, but the structure of this. Interview is based off of the seven step kind of storytelling, archetypal storytelling process.

And, um, one of the earlier questions about mentors, uh, kind of wrapped in what many of people recognize as the step of finding your team, who's, who's going on this journey with you and Yeah. Uh, I think maybe it's a little meta to talk about storytellers also emulating, uh, archetypes and stories. But I think it is really important to be conscious of who you bring on, uh, on your, on your [01:04:00] journey as a storyteller.

Um, who you, who you listen, listen to you, who you respond. Yeah.

Ester Ellis: I'm slow with it. Yeah. And maybe we should be so slow, uncomfortable . Like, I, well, and for me it comes from like, probably comes from insecurity. Cause I'm not a very insecure person, but I am a very much, I'm gonna do stuff in my corner and then I will bring it when it's ready.

Because I don't think you're gonna want to see it until it's ready. Um, and so I, in the way I've done my projects, it's like, all right, station blue, season one, just me, season two, we got a full suite of actors, but it's taken me two years to write the damn thing because I'm like, I can't present. I need, I don't wanna waste the actor's time.

So I need the whole season to be written. I don't know how to write an ensemble show, so I need to learn how to write an ensemble show. Um, and then I need to make sure it's good. Uh, and I can't, I'm limited in my ability to like mess around with it after it's recorded cuz I don't wanna waste people's time.

Um, and that probably wasted a year of my life of just like trying to wait until something was ready to show these people rather [01:05:00] than just giving it to them. Um, that's what, that's a lesson learned. I should have just done that. Whereas now, you know, and then with my next project it's like, cool, I'm gonna bring on two people now.

And then with Goblet Wire, it's like cool work, working with others. And then I made a thing called Whale Song this year. . Um, which was my, like, if, you know, if I went to a Q code or if I went to a place where they give you a big budget, what would I make? And it's like, this is what I expect outta six figure budgets is, is, you know, this, it's so good.

It's so good. Thank you. It's just, it's a lot. And that was my thing. I'm like, this is the scale I expect. Right. Um, and I'm not getting that out of people with money and I don't know why. I mean, I do know why, but it's like, what's your excuse? Like, I made this in two months, like start to finish. Um, and I brought a lot of people on and now I'm like, I don't want to do this job.

I'm not well suited for this job. Who likes doing this job? Because there's always someone who likes doing the job you don't want to do. Um, so I, I imagine this time next year I'm [01:06:00] going to have just piles of people where it's like, you do this, you do that. But I've also been, you know, when, when did we get into this game?

Early 2018. Yeah, at 20.

Lisette Alvarez: And I've been actively 17. I think for me. because

Ester Ellis: yeah, I've been active in it, you know, it's taken me a long time to like warm up and trust and like find the right people. Um, and partly too, like I don't pursue collaboration often with other creators cuz generally if I want to pro collaborate with you, it's cuz you're making something dope that I love and I want you to keep doing it.

And if I try to collab, like I don't wanna pull you away from that. Um, that happens a lot where people are like, oh, you know, th this is actually, you know, there's a conundrum is getting into d divers diversity and storytelling. Especially when you wanna bring on people who, uh, have voices and perspectives that you don't have is certain group, right?

There's a time where you're like, all right, I could [01:07:00] bring you on to my story, but I feel like it would be better if I just hel helped you tell your story. And then that's kind of the, uh, a thing I've been trying to find out how to balance of like, I don't wanna distract, in fact, like I think, you know, if I want to tell to inc.

Like I, I've disability incorporated into Station Blue, partly because of our crew. Like we have those voices. Um, however, I think if one of those crew members told like they would do a better job talking about disability with a show that focused on that than this bipolar disorder show that has disabled characters at the same time, like the representation's important, right?

I want to have these characters in there. And so I, I spend too much time thinking about this and luckily I don't like have it hold me up. It's just like, luckily, like I think we're, we're very lucky to have wide groups of friends from lots of perspectives and a medium that values these stories. Um, . But then that's the thing of [01:08:00] we tend to get really busy telling our thing.

Yeah. Or making our thing. And it's like, I don't want to distract from that. Um, so usually for me, I'm looking for creators who aren't making, like, for example, audio drama, but would be open to it, who are trying to get their voices out. It's like, all right, this is a good to

Lisette Alvarez: get to get

Ester Ellis: you hop. You know, I, I don't wanna derail someone who's already making a beautiful show.

If anything, I'd want to help that. But there's a lot of people who wanna be creating, who are not in a great position to do so. So

Lisette Alvarez: it's kind of, or in or in one of the mediums that are ha are heavily gate kept.

Ester Ellis: Yeah. You know, where you're just sitting there. Like that's I something I love about new media is the immediate reaction.

Whereas I've been talking to some musician friends and they're like, oh, I put this thing on TikTok and like 20 people like commented on it and that feels good. I was like, oh yeah. Cuz you make like a whole album and agonize over it before anybody hears it. Like you don't get that reaction and like, getting into storytelling, it's like you're telling it to someone, right?

That is a [01:09:00] relationship, or to me it's an implied relationship. Even if you're just outside talking to the stars, like you're, you're talking to the stars, like that's an audience. Um, and that's an important element is like, I do think you need feedback there.

Lisette Alvarez: Yeah. No, I, that's something I, I have also started to accept more as a role of storyteller is again, yeah.

This relationship between storyteller and story and who it's being told to. Um mm-hmm. and this, I guess, we'll, I'll, I'll round this out to my last question, which is related to this concept, which is why do you tell stories?

Ester Ellis: Okay. Well, in the beginning I told the beginning right, of like immortality. So now I will answer it with what it has brought me.

Like why do I continue to tell stories? . And so I have bipolar disorder, uh, which is a whole thing. Um, and it [01:10:00] brings a lot of things into my life. Uh, but with that comes periods of like intense, uh, mental pain and confusion and all of that in making Station Blue, a show where, like, the show I wish had existed when I was 15, to give me some perspective on like what is it like living with this thing.

Um, I have unintentionally changed the associations with some of the worst, is that a judgment thing? Most painful elements of my mental disorder with helping others. So now, because in putting it out, I've received a lot of feedback and emails from people who've either found diagnosis through the show or

found connection through the show, or like the, the audience I wanted to find, right?

I've found a lot of those people and in responding now, when I go through an intense period that's very difficult, my initial [01:11:00] association in my mind is like, cool, there's gold to be, you know, uh, woven out of this straw. Like this is something, this is a source, right? This is a resource that I can turn and have turned into something that will bring more help to people than it's bringing pain to me, which has made life a lot easier and a lot better because now I have this thing that it's like, Difficult to like keep a, a level head on your shoulders.

And now the immediate associations with the worst parts of it are like, cool. This has helped me tell stories that have helped people and helped and in turn now helped myself. And so I like that. Keeps it going. There's not so much anymore, but like year two, like I kind of lost touch with like, oh, why, why am I writing?

And then I ended up in like a dark depression and I was like, oh wait, no at, even if nobody was [01:12:00] listening to this, I need to be writing and making stuff just so I can like get this out right and think about it and whatnot. So that, and that's an important thing is remembering like, why did you create in the first place?

Keep doing that. Like hold onto that. Um, because part of having bipolar disorder is you go through these different periods and you forget the periods that come before. Cuz it's like how do you relate to mania when you're depressed? Right. When you don't wanna get outta bed. How do you relate to the idea of like, not sleeping for a week or when you're manic, how do you relate to depression when you just feel like you're on top of the world and you want to take it over?

uh, you, you can't, the way you do it is by, in my case, like writing it down and telling a story about it. Um, and there are episodes like the sixth episode of Station Blue. I wrote in one state and I produced it in another state. And in a way, like at first I was worried that there was gonna be a conflict there, but what I did is I cut out half of the lines of the episode and made it nonverbal and then made the version of that story that I would tell in that state.

And in [01:13:00] that way, I created this marriage between these two different states of mind. Uh, that's rather, you know, unique from my perspective, um, and adds authenticity to the show. And I think people who have experienced those things, um, like bipolar disorder even, I think it ends up ringing true for

them in a way where like a lot of other people's shows, whether or not the creator intended it because of the way they created it, who they were, what their voice was, all of that.

There's gonna be elements that like you can't read in a writing book. Where you're like, no, that feels right. Like that feels correct. Like that feels human. Um, and so now it's just like, great. I keep doing that, keep moving forward. And the more I do it, the better my life experience gets. It hasn't cured or solved or changed anything.

Right. But it has given me perspective that I wasn't able to tap into before. And at the very least, when I met my most, like beaten and pragmatic, [01:14:00] you know, I can do the math and I don't necessarily like agree with the, is that utilitarianism? Yeah. I dropped out of college, um, where it's just like, oh, cool, uh, I'm in pain.

But it brings other people's happiness, so it's fine, but it's like, I'm gonna be pain anyways. And if I can bring a lot of other people something positive, like why not? Like, what else am I doing otherwise I'm just in pain. And it,

Lisette Alvarez: and it sounds like that stories actually. By doing that, you are also helping your own pain.

Ester Ellis: Absolutely. Which then makes it easier to live a full life . Right? It, uh, because I'm less likely to end up in dangerous places when I'm in those states because I, I just like, if I'm in a bad state, it's like, cool. Gotta write this. It's another tool. I like the way I, yeah, I will always spend at least a year on a writing project, um, even if I were to get it done earlier, because I want to revisit, like if I'm in a depression, I wanna revisit the scenes and [01:15:00] the scripts that need that.

And if I'm in a manic period, I want to revisit the scenes in episodes that need that, and then I want to go over them again. Because depression comes in many flavors. Mania comes in many flavors. Um, I, I want to be able to go through multiple rounds while in those states and out of those states to refine the thing.

And that's like something I've learned. Luckily for that process. It usually takes me longer than a year to write something. So, Works out. Thank

Lisette Alvarez: you for talking about that, cuz I think that's, um, digging into a deeper level of truth telling for yourself and actually developing your own voice as a storyteller, which I think is incredibly important.

And like you said, we all have our own journeys, um mm-hmm. through this particular choice of vocation or what have you. And seeing that [01:16:00] modeled in this way and hearing your process is really affirming to me that here's here's Ava lady who's figured it out. , you know? Yeah. Yeah. Yay. Yeah. Go back to the, you know, mid-Atlantic style, um mm-hmm.

you can choose your own style and you can develop

Ester Ellis: your own race. That's what big. uneducated can be helpful because you don't know any of the rules to follow. So you're just like, I going back to like, is this effective? You try to tell it in a way that's effective. Um, and then you learn it through there.

Like I, I've seen ed people with like master's degrees and whatnot in these things be held back. Granted. I've seen other people benefited greatly from them. Uh, that's more of encouragement to people who don't have access to those things such as me. Um, and of like, no, there's, there's good stuff that comes here.

And at the end of the day, like I, I wanted, I threatened to take a writing class from [01:17:00] another podcast creator and they're like, don't take this class like you could teach this class. It's like, I don't have the education. They're like, you, you told a story that like incorporates everything I'm trying to teach in this class.

Like you have all the education you. . Um, and that's fun.

Lisette Alvarez: Yeah. No, and it, it's, I, that's something too that I've started to experience is, um, how much I have actually learned by doing. And in our very, as someone who also has a master's degree, uh, I learned so much by doing, I learned so much by listening obviously.

But, um, I think all of us needs to have a beginner's mind perspective on the things that we really care about because, or else we will grow stagnant. We will get caught in writer's block if we're not able to, um, tell ourselves at some level, okay, where am I at? What do I think I know and what do I think I don't know?

And what stories have [01:18:00] I not experienced yet? Because I think there's just so many stories. Uh, within all of us, especially us storytellers that have not been told yet mm-hmm. , that we could, if we pull, if we decide to pull the strings,

Ester Ellis: um, and it's a great medium for them. Oh yeah. Because I do, you know, at least once a year, a couple shows come out that cover a perspective I haven't been able to experience in another medium.

Yeah. Um, and now I'm just like, cool. How do you get resources to people to continue to do that? Yeah. That's because God money does solve so many problems. Does like, we're talking about that in goblet wire of like, all right. With, you know, we, we've got specific like ranges we want to cover, but for example, like if you wanna hire a sound designer, an audio drama, like a lot of the sound designers are white.

Yep. And so if you want, if you are not white and you want to tell a story through, through, and you wanna bring on, uh, someone that reflects your story's perspective, [01:19:00] Do you know what would make that really easy if you had a lot of money? Because if you had a lot of money, it's like there are sound designers of every like, uh, experience level.

It's just how many can justify working for pennies per hour, which is what sound design ends up kind of coming out to. Yeah.

Lisette Alvarez: And that is something that, sorry, my cat decided to make a guest appearance. Um, hi Cat. It's Leila. Um, uh, that's something that the Writer's Guild of America Audio Alliance, um, has been talking about more is, uh, about sound designers.

And I think this, this constitutes a, a, a whole other podcast and a whole other discussion around Yeah. around, uh, what. financial sustainability looks like now and could look like, um, in the future for, for audio storytelling. Um, I have a [01:20:00] lot of strong ideas and a lot of, like, I don't, I don't

Ester Ellis: know. . I bet I, my main like for the point of this discussion, I think the core is recognizing like where resources can help us tell better stories.

Mm-hmm. . And I think a lot of it's that, right? Giving people who are trying to tell a story, you want to hear resources. Um, and then also how if they have resources. Because like if I'm sound designing a show that incorporates mental illness, I can bring perspective there that will be valuable. And I imagine that's true for a lot of things and a lot of stories.

um, and God money because if you had enough money, you could have someone get trained in, for example, sound design and then come and like do a good job. Right? And so there are resources there and for the various, like few

people kind of have decision making power in how they get [01:21:00] distributed. I think that's like an important takeaway of learning.

Like, because we are in a medium where it's like we are taking performance and writing and sound and like all of these elements. Um, and there are stories that would benefit from having, uh, lived experience in all elements of that. Uh, how you get that, if it's a pla you know, it's, it's money, right? Money fixes it.

You can find someone with little to no money, right? But if you have money, you can get any kind of person you need. Yeah.

Lisette Alvarez: It, it's, it's. One of those things. And I think this affects pretty much every arts based industry, arts based story. Art is inherently devalued in our culture. And actually, to refer back to something you brought up, which is, uh, south Korean, uh, films, television that have, um, yeah.

Really [01:22:00] broken through, uh, even our, our western, um, our, our western storytelling mediums. Uh, I just, I, I listened to a, I believe it was, it was an npr, um, or BBC podcast. I, it was some kind of, it was a, it was a podcast or radio, um, discussion about the reason why South Korea has suddenly. Exploded onto Main Street Global.

Um, relevance. And the person who was talking about it was a historian and actually could point to, um, a couple decades ago when the South Korean government decided to fund the arts, decided to actively fund the arts. And , I mean, also harking back to your covet of like, well, it's the system, the United States [01:23:00] government that these stories are telling we need a fight.

Um, part of me questions like, do we really want the US government to be fu the arts right now? Uh, or it's in a good position, but at the same time,

Ester Ellis: yeah. I'm of a person where it's like, I'll take anybody's, almost anybody's money , and that, that I, I would say, reflects more of how dire the situation is that like.

Scruples I don't see value in at our current stage. I think once you're at a higher point in the Maslow's hierarchy of creative needs, like then have some scruples. But cuz that's like, I have people who are cynical and like, you know, talking about like, oh, Disney made an actual leftist show with this new Star Wars show.

What does it mean? I'm like, Hey, if, if my, you know, Republican family members have now liked this leftist Star War show and we have more avenues to have an actual conversation, I don't care if Disney's fund, I don't care who's funding it. I don't care. Is it, it doesn't [01:24:00] work? Is it helping the world get to a better place?

I'll take it and I could be wrong. Right. And that's something, you know, I talk about, like my friend, uh, who is deep into political education in academia talks about like South Korea's soft power. Yes. That's the soft power, a big thing. And that's a case where it's like, cool, that's soft power that I will take

Or you have like one of my favorite, probably my favorite movie of last year, which is saying something cuz everything everywhere all at once came out last year. Oh my god, that should have been my favorite movie of the decade. But it's not R

Lisette Alvarez: Rrr. R r oh oh. Oh my God. Oh my God. Finally somebody else .

Ester Ellis: Oh, I've seen that movie in theater.

Like I saw that movie in the Chinese theater with the director the first time he saw it in imax uh, a couple months ago. Y'all need to stop.

Lisette Alvarez: That's a movie, this podcast right now and load up R rrr i

Ester Ellis: Warrior God. Yeah. Please stu study that movie at the same time. That is a equivalent of a Zack Snyder movie when it comes to politics here.

Right? Right. You have [01:25:00] issues in India with, uh, Hindu nationalists, you know, and they're feeding off of this in the same way where like, we have certain movies we avoid here cuz it's like, ah, the, the MAGA types are gonna like that. Um, But in Amer, in the United States, I think probably most Hindi people could use more support and understanding.

Right? We're not under a threat of a right wing, conservative, religious group, uh, coming from that corner. And therefore we can just enjoy and listen to and take lessons from the revolutionary plot line while knowing that if we're speaking about it on like the global internet, that in India, it's like, listen to the people in India who are like, Hey, here's why this is feeding a beast.

We don't want to feed right. And that, you know, that that's kind of what it comes down to. It's like, I will take Squid game. Right. I'll take it. I, I love the lesson of Squid Game. It's a brutal show, but it is not a [01:26:00] romanticize, a brutal show, which is something we seem incapable of making. . Um, yeah, well that, that's where I'm at.

And maybe this, this I can think gets into like, yeah, no, this

Lisette Alvarez: goes into something I eventually want to, uh, that I am actually currently writing a show that hopefully taps into this method, talking about goals, um mm-hmm that taps into this international side of storytelling, that this cross national side of storytelling that, um, you know, to answer the question of like, what I feel people don't talk enough about, I don't think people talk enough about cross national storytelling, and especially it's not, there's not near enough of that in audio

Ester Ellis: drama right now.

It's difficult to learn about. This is something I've heard toe talk about is the idea of, like you have, when I was speaking earlier about the two writing books Wild, that it all ties together, right? Maybe that story is worth telling, um, of like, these two writing books have [01:27:00] fundamentally different goals on like how a story should progress.

Um, but if you look at writing traditions under Around the world, they serve different practices. Right? And with the context of that culture, they do different things. Um, uh, there's an animated movie, a Japanese film, so I guess anime. I don't know if movies are still called anime, uh, called Ink. I'm gonna go see a, the movie with the director tonight.

Cool. Um, and it's available on like streaming services now, like you can rent it. And I, I think the Blu-ray is coming out in a couple weeks. Um, and it is a like queen esque rock opera in futile Japan. Talking about, uh, I think they're the hakey stories like these, these traditional samura stories, um, that are part of the ancient story tradi telling tradition there.

And these lost ones and these two trans one's a blind biwa player, and one is a disabled like singer dancer. Uh, [01:28:00] bringing these stories to life, these lost stories and this song, like as a musical, it's fascinating because the songs are like 10 minutes long and they are just slowly telling a story that does not have a point.

It, it's it's history, right? But you're like, this is great and this is rich, and you wouldn't write this here. Um, and that's something I would, it's, I don't know where to learn more about it. Um, but I'd love to learn more of like, what are we, we know what like a satisfying story looks like in like Western, particularly like United States storytelling.

Um, but what are storytelling traditions that don't fit that at all? And. What is the best way to find, find and tell those stories, and then also give, if you're talking about cross, cross national, how do both nations learn to value the other nation's storytelling? Right. Because I do think context is important.

Yeah. If someone tells you a story and you find it deeply boring, you can't intellectualize yourself out of [01:29:00] it. However, if you know the context for it, you probably won't find it deeply boring. And so I, it's like you need books, you know? And yeah, I'd love, it's this, oh, I'm replacing my answer from before where you're like, what kind of stories do you want?

I'm like, I want stories that tell me how to appreciate story traditions that I don't understand and don't appreciate. Yes. And that's

Lisette Alvarez: something too, I actually think this is related to our industry and audio, because I think people are still unable or feel like audio storytelling is inaccess.

specifically it, they, they don't know how to enter it. Enjoy it and find, right. Oh yeah. Like audio f audio fiction, audio drama. They don't know how to, you need to

Ester Ellis: onboard people. Exactly. Don't start people with my shows. My shows are weird . Start people with some other shows and then when they want a weirder show, send them to me.

Right. That's like if you're a board game collector, probably a third of your board game collection is just [01:30:00] games to teach people rules that you, that exist in games you actually wanna play that are too intimidating. Right. On onboarding

Lisette Alvarez: games. Yeah. No, and I think that's, that's, that's a question I want to continue to ask, um, because I don't think enough fiction podcasters have answered that question.

Yeah. I, I, I, that's at least my opinion. Um,

Ester Ellis: can, can I, can I give you a little, uh, a little spoiler of things to come? Yes. Uh, or currently this could potentially not happen because it's, uh, other adults who get to decide what they want to do with their lives with they're currently writing. Um, we are working on, uh, currently a Southeast Asia branch of the Goblet Wire.

Yes. Um, and my hope is that with the, and they're specifically, I think this is relevant to this conversation cuz there have been times where I'm like, well I [01:31:00] want you to like tell the, you know, what's the authentic version of this? They're like, we're heavily colonized people. A lot of like, cuz I was like, what languages are we gonna incorporate?

They're like, the lingua franca of Southeast Asia is English. Right. That is the common language. I was like, that's fascinating. And finding ways, cuz we're talking about bringing in like a new dictator who's like the narrator of the story, but they're like, I think it would be better if we kept like the American.

Narrator. Uh, but my hope, if there's interest, uh, in making this for one, the story's gonna be very interesting cuz it's very specific to that area. Um, is that we can use that to then do bra branches off of that show. Cuz I'm not selling that show to anybody. I'm not having it funded by anybody outside of like, crowdfunding.

Um, so that we could do, you know, if there's a group in Brazil who's like, Hey, we, you know, have stories that we wanna tell, I can like, it's like, cool, let's start a South American feed, or let's start like a port and then if it breaks up from there, it's like, cool. Have a pork Portuguese feed, have a [01:32:00] Spanish feed.

We'll see how far it goes. But that cuz like, I'm very interested in that for the goblet wire. It's all right. Like what, what's the downside to having other storytelling traditions in a show that's already like, not really following rules? There is none. Right. Um, and the idea of like, Richard who plays the, the dictator who's the narrator, um, Is a very like Rod Sterling type.

And so then I was talking to, uh, some friends from Mexico and they're, I was like, what is, because I'm like, when we do the, the Spanish speaking dictator, rod Sterling's, not necessarily the equivalent there, right? Like, what is the equivalent in the culture we're currently trying to explore? And the answer is there's always a lot, but you, you pick a culture.

Um, and in one of their cases they're like, well, I want to do bruja. Like, I want to take like a, a witch medicine woman and like bring those flavors in based on these stories. Yeah. It's like dope. Yeah. That's something we can look at. So I'm like, that, that's a hope I have for this show [01:33:00] of just being able to like, all right, de talking about decentralized storytelling, just being like, here have, you know, finding teams in other, uh, culture.

And then giving them the seed funding and resources they need to kick off. And then ideally, that takes a life of its own. And we eventually have like numerous, but at the very least we know we've got this project in the works. Seriously, I'm very excited to hear it. This,

Lisette Alvarez: this sounds exactly up. My Ali and I will be, um, messaging you to stay on top of it because I wanna hear more.

Yeah. Um, yeah. But I'll, I'll wind us down now. Um, thank you for, for, for this. And honestly, I feel I could talk for additional hours, um, about this. So something you and I have in common. Yeah, we could just talk like just, there's,

Ester Ellis: there's, there's whole, when you're like, you're like, all right, I want to keep this under an hour.

I was like, good luck. Many have tried, but I will attempt to keep you too.

Lisette Alvarez: I'm also, [01:34:00] uh, a a, I'm also a, uh, culprit of, um, underestimating how much I wanna talk about. That's good stuff.

Ester Ellis: You have good ideas and you've spent a lot of time collecting and developing them, like, yeah, it takes time. Yes. But I'm glad you're, you know, doing a whole feed of this kind of thing, honestly.

Cause then I can listen to it. Yeah. And,

Lisette Alvarez: and you know, I, I did I And like you, like you, um, like you mentioned before, uh, if you feel like, oh, I haven't seen enough of this, or there isn't enough of this, um, to go and look first.

Ester Ellis: Yeah. Because I think a lot of times there is that thing. Mm-hmm. like a thing. I'm confident when I'm like, I don't see, this is like sound design and storytelling.

That is like leaving, like entering dreamscape. Like leaving behind a lot of like assumptions we get from movies and shows. Right. And that one, I'm pretty confident when I'm like, ah, there's not a lot of this because like, [01:35:00] I am looking for it. But that, that's more of a like resource production thing. Yeah.

When it comes to the actual stories, Yeah. Um, there's been plenty of times I've heard people be like, there's not enough of this. I'm like, those totally exist. Right. Go, go find them and then prop them up and then see what you can do to contribute Yeah. To that corner of storytelling just and see like, okay, can more happen.

Just please don't

Lisette Alvarez: reinvent audio trauma for God's sake. ,

Ester Ellis: do you wanna know my hottest take? Yes. I don't care if people reinvent audio drama. Like anytime people are like, we're doing the thing for the first time. I'm like, good for you buddy. At this point I am

Lisette Alvarez: fun. I'm also fun in that. I'm also in that camp.

I'm like, ah, that's at this point. It's funny. At

Ester Ellis: this point it's like it's, I do still find it funny. Heard of music. It's cute. It's cute. Exactly. Uh, yeah. Um, , it's funny, but like, I don't know. I, there are other things to be outraged about. Yes, absolutely. PE And I'm not saying don't be outraged by that. I'm glad people are pushing back [01:36:00] cuz someone should, uh, I am not part of it.

I'm drinking my, you know, apple juice. on the non-existent on my stoop. I don't have a porch. I have a stoop. Um, I should be like, all right, is this helping me tell a story? No. Cool. I'm gonna put my energy elsewhere. Right.

Lisette Alvarez: Well, uh, that's something too. Um, at this point there, there is a very good, um, advice in minding your own business.

Uh, and I, I, at this point, um, I want to, like I said, with, with this particular podcast, For Tales from the Hearth, I want to both, uh, connect with what's the community needing in terms of story. Mm-hmm. . And if I can tap into that uncon collective unconscious of what stories people want to hear. And it doesn't mean these story people wanna hear.

It means what stories do people want to hear and, you know, training

Ester Ellis: Well, something like this is great [01:37:00] cuz there's like, the new generations are so good. Their shows are so much better out the get-go than what we were making when we were out the get-go. Yeah. It is nice to see the collective like talent and I think part of that is from sharing resources going out, but there's a lot of lessons we learned that the new generation doesn't know.

Like they haven't had the chance to learn that. Which is so it's like don't be a jerk to them. Yes. Be nice to newbies. Yeah. Um, and like have empathy, have some understanding and some patie. . Um, and also share information. I, that's something you and I were talking about. It's like, oh yeah. There are lessons that like I have that I haven't thought, thought to share.

Cuz I don't wanna be like sanctimonious. But there's like, no, there's actually like, this is something we should have like probably a yearly refresher of like, new to the game. Here's something, here's some basic stuff that's good to have. Yeah. There's

Lisette Alvarez: nothing, nothing should be taken for granted when, especially it comes to things like, like you and I again, we talked about we've been in this now for years, some [01:38:00] years, and which, you know, is, is significant and that means that we've seen things happen over and over again or we've learned things accumulatively and it is helpful Yeah.

To reiterate that and not treat it as like, oh my god, run rolling. We're bringing this up again. Yeah, because there's. New, like you said, new crops of people who are coming into this. So,

Ester Ellis: and there's also new cultures. Yes. And I'm not talking about like international cultures here. I'm talking about like within, you know, western storytelling, online interaction.

There are different philosophies in different cultures. I've seen a lot of, uh, when I've played media mediator over the last year, it's been this group and this group, like figures are rubbing up against each other. Cuz I'm like, you just have, our generation has a very specific culture on like what you say and what you can do in all of that.

Like one of the new cultures that I've come across, like they tend to be more [01:39:00] reserved. Um, that like stating X, Y, and Z is not something that they value. Right. Um, and so I just try to mediate like. Because I somehow, I always

end up in the middle of all of these things, . Um, I'm just like, Hey. Nah, the both groups are chill.

Like it's cross-cultural communication skills. They're not following your rules. Yeah. But your rules are not laws. Like those are just your rules. Those are your useful for your people. Recognize that other people have D right? Yeah. Everyone's goals are the same here. Tell good stories. Uh, smash the US government

That's, that's a Marvel joke.

Lisette Alvarez: Yes, it is a Marvel joke. Uh, for, for those listening, um, not a, uh, threat or any, a kind for full disclaimer,

Ester Ellis: what could I do? Oh yeah. I'm just, you know, I'm just trying to get people's kids like better mental health understanding, so threatening and being trans while doing it, which, you know, I think does more help than our

Lisette Alvarez: Correct? [01:40:00] Absolutely correct. Uh, . I thank you again, um, Esther, for, for getting on, and it's been wonderful talking to you. I'm going to, uh, to, uh, leave the door open. You ca uh, this podcast is meant to be more experimental, less, um, rigid and highly produced, largely because realistically, I'm the only one producing it.

Uh, so I, I'm gonna, I'll, I'll think about how I wanna edit this. I probably won't edit it too much. Um, but the reason is that I do this is meant to be not just a resource, uh, a mostly uncensored resource for other people, but also for me. Yeah. And I think my goal as a storyteller is to raise up other people's voices, um, at many levels.

So, uh, obviously, you know, reaching out to people I know first just because I, uh, it's a comfort thing for me [01:41:00] to kind of. Get this wheel generating before we know good people and we know good people, we know good people. And at the same time, like, I'm hoping that this also is encouraging for people who, um, who, who do want to get into this space and know that, uh, there are many stories to be told here and many stories left to be told.

So. Yeah. Um,

Ester Ellis: well, if, if you, if you want connection with some of the new kids, uh, they're great. Tell me. Yeah, I will. I'm a big fan. I, I will pass that on to you after this thing. Give me, give me the babies because Yeah. I, I do, you know, I,

I think yeah, the approach of like grabbing who you know is important, but then also like in with what we're talking about with like different traditions and whatnot, it's like, yeah, this is a good, good platform for that.

And I think people will find it useful. Yeah. I, I will. Yay.

Lisette Alvarez: And I, I, I'm hoping to, uh, get this out as generally as soon as, like I said, , it's gonna be easy breezy. I'm hoping to do,

Ester Ellis: um, yeah, don't edit this too much. This is a [01:42:00] creator focused show, creative focus show. You know, if you like, you're, you're grabbing a, a minimal amount of people for a maximum result.

They can handle some extra ums and whatnot. Like, I have not made things that would probably be useful in the past cuz I was like, oh, but this is gonna be a 10 hour, it's like, ah, if I had just spent an hour, it would've existed, but I need to spend 10 because I am like this. I'm trying to get into that.

And this is also,

Lisette Alvarez: this is also one of those, uh, practices for myself against, um, perfection, which is, uh, as some might know, uh, is a tool of white supremacy. So pushing back against perfectionism is a helpful to, to dismantle that. So actually putting out, yeah, putting out stuff that's not, um, fully, you know,

Ester Ellis: I didn't know that.

That's great. Thank you for sharing that. You're welcome. Right. We all, we're always learning. That makes sense. Yeah. It checks out.

Lisette Alvarez: Protectionism is a tool of white supremacy. There is a list somewhere, and I'll put [01:43:00] this in the show

Ester Ellis: notes too. Oh yeah. Give me the li cuz like, I've learned a lot of good lessons from people, but like, I don't like catchphrases like that are good.

Great. It's really pippy state statements cuz you're,

Lisette Alvarez: yeah. It's a really ga uh, characteristics of white supremacy. Was that what it is? Um,

Ester Ellis: It's, that's something we don't need in audio drama, white supremacy. Absolutely

Lisette Alvarez: not. Uh, I'm gonna have to try to find it. I, I, I did, I was, I'm doing a quick Google search.

Yeah. But there's actually a really great, I believe there's also a fairly popular TikTok creator who also like, runs down the tools of white supremacy, um, to, you know, in order to dismantle it. Right?

Ester Ellis: Yeah. I, I will, I will take it. Cuz those are things I aim not to contribute to, but by default I will contribute to that.

Lisette Alvarez: That's the thing about I think anything toxic or things that we need to change is you need to ha one, you need to be able to identify it. You need to [01:44:00] identify it as the pro as a problem. And then two, you need something to replace it with, you know, what to do instead. Yeah. Pretty simple. , but, uh, yeah. Uh, I'll, I'll also share, share with, share with folks, um, that.

uh, piece of information because, uh, at the very least, it can also be included in your stories.

Ester Ellis: Yeah. I like this cauldron approach of a podcast of like, add it to the cauldron, add it to the This

Lisette Alvarez: is useful. Yes. Listen, that's, uh, you're, you're absolutely right. That is a, uh, really good way to approach this, um, or to, to identify the characteristic of this.

I definitely wanna treat it as a cauldron. Like throw things in, see what happens.

Ester Ellis: You got this, you know, campfire element, storyteller element. Yes. And you put, ideally put cauldron fire. So, yes. No,

Lisette Alvarez: that's the, you create a,

Ester Ellis: this is what we're talking about earlier. Yes. Finding story [01:45:00] elements that gel together.

Makes sense. Yeah. Delicious.

Lisette Alvarez: Ev you know, anything you put on the hearth fire, you always want to, um, then. To other people. Yeah. All right. Uh, thank you again, Esther, and I hope you have a wonderful rest of your week, and thank you for being a storyteller with me and telling me

Ester Ellis: stories. Thanks for having me on.

This is a blast.