

EPISODE 18:
Heist, Heist, Baby

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MACEY: Hello, and welcome to Be the Serpent, a podcast of extremely deep literary merit, with your classy and sophisticated hosts, Alexandra Rowland, Freya Marske, and Jennifer Mace. On today's episode, we're discussing HEISTS! And cons, and grifters, and all sorts of fabulous things!

[intro music]

A: Hello, and welcome to Episode 18, Heist, Heist, Baby. I'm Alex, the mastermind/grifter one.

F: I'm Freya, the grifter/mastermind one.

M: And I'm Macey, the other grifter/mastermind one.

F: We are three redheaded fantasy authors...

A: ...and that was one of our most unhelpful taxonomies ever! Uh. Let's discuss that. But first: what are we reading, fellow serpents?

F: I just today finished reading a book called [Jane Doe](#) by Victoria Helen Stone. So this is a book about a Slytherin sociopath female character who moves back into her old hometown to systematically destroy the life of a man who abused her best and only friend to the point where this friend committed suicide.

M: Mmmm...

F: The nar— it's very strong first person narration, of someone who is a fairly pure sociopath, and just from a revenge plot point of view and the sharp observations of the ways in which fuckwit men abuse women, it is *so good*. Highly recommend. It's a pretty quick read, very sort of short chapters the way that you see in thrillers sometimes. And I thoroughly enjoyed it. If you like watching Slytherins systematically destroy people who really deserve it? Blanket recommendation. Go for it.

M: You cannot imagine the amount of high pitched noises I've been making at Freya about this book, and distinct amounts of GRABBY HANDS because I WANT IT because it sounds like all the best parts of the TV show [Revenge](#) without the... downsides.

F: Yeah. Yeah, it's like that. And the other thing that I have been consuming—speaking of terrible, terrible media decisions—I have fallen into a pit of a new Chinese drama. Those listeners who were around for the great “Freya gets everyone into [Nirvana in Fire](#)” saga will recognize the early symptoms. So I have been watching... [Guardian](#). Now, *Nirvana in Fire* is an excellent television show. *Guardian*... is an awful television show.

[M laughs]

F: The production values are *so bad*. It's sort of like season 1 of [Merlin](#) if the CGI was *worse*.

A: [shocked and appalled and clearly unsure what to do with this information] OH. That's *saying* something.

M: Oh, it's worse. Oh, it's a lot worse.

F: Yeah, and the scripts are dodgy, lots of the acting is questionable... but the two main characters, the acting is superb, and the dynamic between them is *so good*. So it's essentially an urban fantasy procedural... kind of...

M: Except that because China—

F: Because China, they can't have fantasy. So it's based on a Chinese webnovel which was based quite heavily in Chinese mythology and also was outright gay. So the two characters, the two main characters, actually in a romantic relationship. But when they made it for TV, they had to be like... welllllll... we can't have *magic*, so we have to call it “science...”

[A laughs]

F: So there's these deeply, deeply implausible “it's aliens and mutations!” and things like that in order to explain essentially, like, X-Men super powers. It... you have to just sit through the exposition and ignore it. But the two main characters are a sort of dirtbag motorcycle-riding supernatural cop who—

M: HAS THE WORST MUSTACHE! *THE* worst mustache. Like, it's... amazing.

F: He has dirtbag facial hair. And he wears leather jackets and, like, slouches around with lollipops in his mouth flirting indiscriminately. And the uptight professor who he encounters on a case who is also secretly a badass ambassador-slash-magical-figure who has come into his life

to take care of him slash keep an eye on him because this person is also the reincarnation of the dude he fell in love with hundreds of years ago.

A: That's a lot.

F: There's so much fealty in it, the dynamic between them even though the TV show can't make it outright gay... it's just like flirt flirt flirt flirt flirt.

M: It's very, very gay.

F: It's very, very gay. [Laughs]

M: And as you might have gathered from the shouting... Freya might have gotten me as well. But I'm only five episodes in, so I will count that as a success. I am being restrained!

F: There's only forty episodes! It's not a *Nirvana in Fire*, like, eternal saga. I'm not all the way through either. Yeah, I cannot in good conscience *recommend* it as a *quality* television show, but it's all on Youtube with English subtitles. Yeah. Have fun.

M: [Starts to make like three different variations on the words "UM ACTUALLY" before finally deciding on] ...fun is one word. Meanwhile, other than this terrible decision I made to listen to Freya, which is always a good life choice except for when it's not...

[A laughs]

F: I give amazing advice, thank you.

M: Except for when it's *not*. Um, I have also read Alex's book, because the *Conspiracy* ARC is on a world tour so I took it on an adventure... we went on a ferry! And then I have also been reading a nonfiction book about con artists. (At least 50% because I wanted to finish it to give it to Freya... because I'm sitting in Freya's spare bedroom right now as we record this!)

A: Yay!

F: Yay!! Yes. I have a Macey.

M: [Makes a small cute mouse kind of sound]

A: That's very good. It's very good.

F: I dragged her to the ice rink and maybe made her watch me fail around on my ice skates this morning.

A: I heard that it was very good. She told me that you didn't fall more than too many times.

[M cackles]

F: Yeah, I fell an average number of times for me. It's skating. You're gonna fall.

A: I see, I see. And I read Macey's book, *Hagstone*, and we had some really good talks about it and I hope that my comments on it were useful. And also, the thing that I have to mostly shout about this week is that I read [Witchmark](#) by CL Polk... you *NEED to read this book*. This is so good. I'm not spoiling it... I'm *not* spoiling it—

F: 'Cause I can't read it yet! I'm not allowed!

A: Right, Freya's not allowed to read it yet, but I do want to say, dear listeners, that I got like 8% into this book and I went into... I slid into Macey and Freya's DMs and I was like, "Sooooo... when are we going to tentpole *Witchmark*? 'Cause it's amazing and I want to scream about it." It is a secondary-world fantasy set in sort of an Edwardian technological setting, and it's gay and amazing and the worldbuilding is fantastic, the characters are incredible, it has all the tropes you love, go buy it, go get it from the library, go shout about it and tell your friends. I also watched a bunch of TV this week, I started watching [Wynonna Earp](#), which is incredible and I'm enjoying it, I watched [To All the Boys I've Loved Before](#) so that I would know what everyone was talking about on Twitter, and I just got two very exciting books in the mail today which I'm excited about... [1688: A Global History](#) by John E. Wills Jr. which is a world history about exactly one year, and then I also got (continuing the "exactly one year" theme) I also got a recommendation that Macey gave me, which is [1177 BC: The Year Civilization Collapsed](#). And I'm very excited for both of those.

M: In fairness, it's not actually about just one year, it's about a lot more than that, but... the title makes you think it is.

A: Yeah, catchy title.

M: In case you haven't noticed, dear listener, we're nerds.

F: This is... I was gonna say, this is why you guys are the ones doing all the geopolitics and why I'm gonna come to you and make you *do* the geopolitics because you *read* this kind of books and I don't.

A: That's fair, you write my sex scenes for me. So, y'know. Fair trade, fair trade.

F: Yeah, we've all got strengths.

M: I am outsourcing the entire of plotting everything, much to the glee of my longsuffering agent.

A: We got you, boo.

M: So, what are we talking about today, and what are some of the terms that we use, and what do they mean?

A: Well, the rest of the episode is going to be Alex's Fun Facts Yelling About Stage Magicians Corner. That's right, people—

[F laughs]

M: NO. We are VETOING. NO.

A: I can't—

F: I have put *one* dot point for you to yell in. You have to wait til we reach that dot point and then you can yell.

M: Yes, Alex.

A: I'm not allowed to yell for the entire hour..?

M: No.

F: Nope.

M: Listen, we will mute you. I mean, this won't work, listeners, because Alex is in charge of the editing, so Alex can just... like, put *any* shouting that Alex wants in.

F: She can mute *us*, it can be Alex Monologues For An Hour.

M: But no! Be restrained!!

A: I can run my *own* heist here.

F: So we are talking about... heists! And cons. Who would like to define some terms?

A: I feel like most people know what a... well, ok, here's a good question. Are we drawing a distinction between a heist and a con?

M: Yes.

F: Yes.

A: Okay. Tell me then, Macey, since you answered... so I have tricked you—

M: A-ha!

A: —I have *cunningly tricked you* with my own confidence game into making *you* define a term instead of asking the question for *us* to define!

M: Listen. I will make an etymological argument, which is that a heist involves taking something. You can also use “heist” to mean, like, pick something up. Like, you hoist.

A: I think that’s a different word. But, sure, we’ll go with that.

M: But hoist and heist are etymologically connected, though. But I would argue that a heist involves taking a thing, generally a physical object, sometimes (very rarely) an idea, but it involves theft of some sort, whereas a con is short for a confidence game, right? And so a con is far more about tricking someone. Now, I think you’ll find that most things that are heists and cons involve both, but I think it’s a question of degree.

A: And I think you’re right, and now that you’ve explained it, I agree with you. A heist is more about taking something and a con, or a confidence game, is about making someone give you the thing.

M: Or not even necessarily that! I feel like you can have a con that doesn’t involve anything at all changing hands, but is about tricking someone into a belief or a behavior.

A: Mm. Okay. All right, sure.

F: And conversely, you can have a heist that doesn’t have an element of con to it.

M: Mmhm.

F: I mean, maybe small parts of it, but if you think of something like a really well-planned art heist, for example... you can do one of those if it’s very technologically based, if it’s all about cheating systems, then you can do one that doesn’t actually involve the confidence game, the telling of a story to any one individual in particular. Or if it does, it’d be on a very small scale. So I think you can separate them entirely, but it’s more fun when there’s both happening at once.

M: I was just reminded of [the article](#) I think that Alex and I both read about the Chinese art thefts, the rash of... air-quotes around “theft” because you could also call it reclamation of previously-stolen cultural heritage? In the real world. There’s a great article about it and I’m sure we can convince our scribes to link it for the audience, but those were *thefts* much more so than *cons*. And here’s another term that I want to talk about: what’s a grifter? We seem to all be...

like, mastermind is fairly easy to understand, but what is a grifter? How... why are we all grifters?

F: I would say it has something to do with our Slytherin counterpart or Slytherin primary/secondary nature? So to me, a grifter is someone whose primary role is in that confidence game. Their entire job is making someone believe something towards a purpose. And again, it doesn't have to be to get something from them, but it is about either changing someone's mind about something, or making them buy into an idea in order to change their behavior in a way that suits you.

M: So, that's what we're talking about. Why do we like it?

F: Cause it's competence porn.

A: 'Cause it's competence porn. I think that *is* the simple, short, sweet answer. Yeah. For reals. Because in real life, getting robbed is an awful, terrible experience! I have friends who have been mugged on the street or who have had people break into their houses and it really shakes you up in a way that you don't really expect it to.

M: I mean, it's like a violation of what you think is safe, it makes you think that nothing is safe.

A: Yes. Right. Exactly. And even... once when I was in college, I had a roommate who was a teacher at a high school and for a Halloween prank one year some of the students came by the house and just, like, very gently vandalized the house. They didn't do any property damage whatsoever, it was things like putting plastic forks in her lawn, throwing eggs at the house, they used some of that fake snow to spray-paint words on her house... all things that could be cleaned and removed, but it was still kind of terrifying, 'cause we didn't know what was happening. We didn't know at the time that these things were temporary and removable, it was... shook the foundations of what we thought was safe, as you said. Yeah. But we like them in fiction because they're transgressive.

F: And I would argue that we like them because, in most fiction at least, the person who is having the thing done to them is presented in a way that is less sympathetic than the character doing the thing. So some media is more... overt about this. So if you look at the difference between, for example, the TV show [Leverage](#) and the TV show... ah, now I've forgotten its name! The British one.

A: [Hustle](#).

F: *Hustle*. So in *Hustle* it's much more "we are criminals, we are doing this just to rich people to get their money." In *Leverage* there is much more of a moral slant, a more "these people have done something bad, we are getting *back* at them, and they definitely deserve it."

A: Mm.

F: And I think there's always got to be that element of the person deserves it on some level, and there is a throughline in these things that's often quoted... and I don't know if it is particularly realistic, but it is in fiction, they say that you can't con an honest person. Which, in itself, is a statement that there is something about this person that means they deserve it or that they are vulnerable to it.

M: So, I will counteract that. I think that in at least one of our tentpoles we have a good example of a heist being pulled on someone who didn't really do anything wrong, and we are perfectly sympathetic to them. We're perfectly sympathetic to the thieves, even though there is no moral reason for this heist. I think that it's really not about thinking that the victim is a bad person so much as it is being buried in the justification that the character gives themselves. Which may or may not involve that. So you mentioned a couple of shows about what I would call white-hat grifters, to parallel the hacking term, which is Robin Hood type plots: steal from the rich, give to the poor, right injustices... in fact, I would argue that at least two of our tentpoles are not that kind of grift whatsoever. But I also have been reading the book on the psychology of the con, and it really isn't true that you can't con an honest person. You can con anybody who is willing to believe a story.

F: Yeah, and I think that's why it's a fictional justification, 'cause it's to make you feel a little better. It's not true.

M: Right, but I'm not sure that all cons believe that moral... like, all con fiction, even, believes that. I think that it is one of many ways that you can justify a con, but a lot of cons are for profit. Even in fiction.

F: Well, look, in today's capitalist hellscape, I think anybody who has enough money to be *worth* robbing... go for it. Fuck. Eat the rich.

[M laughs]

F: Like, if you've got that 6 million dollar diamond necklace or you've got that much money... you know, you *possibly* deserve it on some level, just the morality of being a billionaire, whereas if you watched an *art heist*, something that was taking from an art gallery... unless there was a very good justification for it, like returning it to traditional owners or there is some particular reason why it shouldn't be there, or you've got a *real* investment in the robber, I believe art should be in art galleries. Whereas stealing 6 million dollars? Go for it.

M: You're telling me that you're really angry at Debbie Ocean for the plot of *Ocean's 8*, then. For stealing those innocent gems.

F: Gems aren't... they weren't artwork.

M: Those are art! I will *fight you!* But, okay. How about... how about street cons? Okay? How about three-card monty and the street magician? Are those stealing from the rich?

F: No, and those aren't as interesting, because it's somebody just...

M: Alex, that was an invitation for you to yell.

A: Oh, I'm sorry. NO. Those are TERRIBLE THINGS, because those aren't cons at all! Those are [*shifts to scathing, gollum-like voice*] magic tricksssssss!!!

F: Alex is figuratively holding up a crucifix, some garlic, and hissing.

A: IN THIS HOUSE WE HATE MAGICIANS. The difference, now you may be wondering, dear listeners... welcome to Alex's Fun Facts Hating Magicians Corner. Welcome, make yourself comfortable.

[F and M laughing in the background]

A: We will be here for the rest of the rest of the hour.

M: It's not a corner.

A: It's not a corner.

M: It's Alex's life.

A: It's a whole room. It's my entire life, you're correct.

[F laughs]

A: So, the difference between a magician and a con artist is very subtle and distinct, and this is the difference *in fiction*. In real life, there's not a whole lot of difference. They're bad people. They shouldn't be stealing things. Listeners, don't go stealing things, and certainly don't blame us if you do.

[M cracks up]

A: Uh, we're not liable.

F: [laughing] This podcast does not endorse criminal activity.

A: This podcast does not endorse criminal activity, thank you.

M: [quietly] ...yes we do, though?

A: [strangled kind of noise] Only in fiction!!

M: Only in fiction.

A: Don't get us sued, *Macey!* Anyway, in fiction, the difference between a magician and a con artist, even though they have exactly the same skillset, is that a magician gives you the smug little self-satisfied smirk, and you're like "How did you do it?" and they're like, "A magician never reveals his secrets!" [extremely smug sound]

M: Alex has been hurt by magicians in the past, clearly.

A: [growling noise akin to a very pissed-off catdog] And... hngggghhhh...

F: Alex doesn't like not knowing things.

M: THAT is true.

A: Alex *really, really* doesn't.

M: That is *true*.

A: The thing that Alex loves more than anything else is secrets. Alex loves knowing secrets, Alex loves having secrets told to her, Alex loves confiding her own secrets, Alex will *never* tell someone else's secret to someone else without permission. If you tell me a secret, it Fort Knox.

M: Alex also loves the third person.

A: Alex *does*, thank you.

[M laughs]

A: A con artist, different from a magician... a con artist will always explain to you how they did the trick. At the end of the book or the movie there's always a little flashback sequence where they show you all the things that they didn't show you on the first pass, and they say, "Oh, here's how we did this! Here's why it was important for us to have a goat in this scene!"

[Laughter]

A: Here's why we needed fifteen pounds of lobsters delivered to the Upper East Side in Manhattan!

F: But those are two different types of *performances*. So, stage magicians are real people, they're not always fictional people, they are real people. They can be fictional.

A: I disagree that even real life stage magicians are real people. I don't think that magicians are people.

F: But they are doing a performance where the point is, you don't know. Whereas you're talking about fictional con artists where the point of that narrative and the point of that performance is the satisfaction of being told at the end. And I made Macey watch the first [Now You See Me](#) movie, which is a duology of movies that I *love*, and it kind of combines the two. Because it shows you magicians as con artists, and then it gives you the tricks at the end. It does that thing where it says, and here's how we did all the magic. So I think you'd probably like those if you could get over your inbuilt hatred for the people involved.

A: Hold on... I may have seen those. Are those the ones that came... there was a thing with an airplane where they, like, stole a whole airplane and they tricked someone into thinking that he was on...

F: That's the second movie, yeah.

M: Okay, well don't spoil that to me, then. But I was not entirely satisfied by those explanations, because that's not how... physics... [audibly cuts herself off before a rant begins]

F: No, there is an element of magical realism to them, where you have to believe that the people involved have slightly extended skills beyond the bounds of... of normality. But there's still providing an explanation. And one of the things I like about the first movie is that it really illustrates that why we like con narratives and heist narratives is because it is a performance. It is a spectacle. And it's showing stage magic as spectacle, and one of the things that happens in the first movie is they're doing a show in Vegas, and they show a heist happening in Paris as part of that show, and the audience gets really on board even though they're not the kind of people who would normally rob banks, because they're turning the spectacle of performance magic into the spectacle and a narrative of heist, which we are *all* really into, as is shown by the popularity of movies like the *Ocean's* franchise.

M: Yes... and I think that, particularly in book form, but I would argue also in movie and TV form, I think that heists engage the same type of muscle that a murder mystery does?

A: Mmm, yeah. Where you have to figure out how they're doing it.

M: Exactly.

A: Yeah.

M: But, yes.

A: Yeah.

M: Well segued, though, into [Ocean's Eight](#), because we are about 1/3 of the way through the episode... we should probably talk about our tentpoles, shouldn't we?

A: Great.

F: I *guess*.

[21:46]

A: So, you said *Ocean's Eight*, so let's do the traditional taking five minutes to scream and make sex noises about *Ocean's Eight*.

[M makes a sound like the stegosaurus in the railway tunnel at Disneyland that is, inexplicably and very anachronistically, fighting with a T-Rex]

A: Ready, set, go... AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA, OH MY GODDDD, *OCEAN'S EIGHT!!*

F: Aaaaaa!!

[M bursts out laughing]

M: I might... I might have watched it again on the plane, and I had forgotten some of Cate Blanchett's outfits, and it was a problem.

A: Did you become more gay?

M: I think that's hard. Like, that's challenging. But...

F: Was your gay enhanced?

M: Sure. Let's go with that. We got... we got a good booster shot.

[F laughing in the background]

A: Okay, sure.

M: I'm so happy. And there's a moment that I loved that I had *entirely* forgotten is in the movie, when they are recruiting their crew, in which Cate Blanchett asks Sandra Bullock, because fuck knows if they have actual names in the film...

A: I don't know, I don't know their names in the film.

F: Debbie and Lou.

M: Cate Blanch— okay, Lou, suggests a hacker or someone who is a man, and Debbie is like, "Eh, no. Men get noticed, women get ignored, and for this job I want us to be ignored."

F: "...let's hire Rihanna!" Which was *such* a good... such a good choice.

M: Yeah, I mean, also that. Lol. She *really* gets *ignored*. [audible eyeroll]

F: She's so good. And that movie does a really good job of that classic "getting the gang together," which is a really satisfying part of any good heist or con narrative. If you want to do the team thing. It's so good.

M: Yes. But I loved it particularly because the way it does it is with these cranky wives who, like... you just came out of prison and you're doing *what?* I mean, you're my partner in life so sure I'll help you but UGHHH, why are you like this?? So engaging, and I love it.

A: It's very familiar, also.

[M laughs]

A: You're my wife and I love you, but *why??*

M: It's like... mood.

F: We don't need men. Eh, men.

A: Eh.

M: So, let's talk about this heist, because this is a really good example of tricking the audience with classic magician-style misdirection. Oh, look, we're stealing this necklace! Look at this necklace! Isn't it big and shiny and—hi, spoilers, by the way, for the movie *Ocean's Eight*, just FYI—

A: If you haven't seen *Ocean's Eight* you're making a very terrible life choice.

M: Pause this thing, you can rent it for like \$2.99, go rent it, watch it, come back.

A: Stop the episode right now.

F: Pause for two hours to recover from Cate Blanchett.

M: Also that.

A: So, four hours from now, come back to the episode. Cool? [Beat] Welcome back to the episode!

M: Well done! Well done! So, it does a really good misdirection with, we're stealing this necklace! Oh, wait..... we got caught stealing this necklace, oh no? But actually the whole time we were trying to steal the entire crown jewels of, like, every nation of Europe.

A: Ugh. So good. So good.

M: And it's... ugh.

F: And I liked that it did... that it actually had the two misdirections in it, because if you're thinking about the original *Ocean's Eleven*, the whole point of that one is that it is a heist that is also a revenge.

M: Mhm.

F: And this one is also a heist and you think, once you start to realize that it's also a revenge, you think that that's the only second layer that there is...

A: Yup!

F: And then it turns around at the end and says, actually, that was *also* misdirection... here are all the sparklies that we got behind your back!

M: [quietly, emotionally] *I love it so much.*

A: It's so good. *Ocean's Eight* in particular is, I think, a great example of the thing that you were saying earlier, Freya. Competence porn. Because this thing just goes off like clockwork. You just get to sit there for two hours and watch these beautiful women in beautiful dresses do the thing! And nobody stands in their way and everything is fine and they all make millions of dollars and ride the subway together!

F: And that's what I love about the *Ocean's* films, and some people would argue that there's a lack of tension in the movies because nothing goes wrong, but the whole *point* is that something goes wrong but it's actually going right.

A: Yeah.

F: And at the end you sit back with that satisfaction, exactly, that you get at the end of a good murder mystery, where Hercule Poirot has sat down and explained everything to you for five pages, and you go, Ah! All of those moving parts fit together really well! Wasn't that nice!

A: Yes. Because the key is not, "Oh my god, are they going to pull it off?" You're sitting down for a con artist flick, you *know* that they're gonna pull it off. You *know* that they're gonna steal the thing somehow.

F: Yes.

A: Like, you're genre-savvy at all, you know this. The question is... *how* do they pull it off? It's the journey, not the destination.

F: Hm... it's a process story.

M: Except that in this one it *is* the destination, 'cause the heist isn't what you think it is. Like, that is also a surprise, which I found charming.

A: True, true.

F: But it didn't *need* that.

M: Yes, you're completely right. It did not need it.

F: It would have been a satisfying story without that, that was just, like, a beautiful cherry on top of the sundae.

M: I think that's why, yeah, I use the word "charming," because it was not... it didn't have to be there, but it was delightful that it was.

A: Yep.

F: Yes.

M: And we read another heist, didn't we?

[26:34]

A: Yes, we also read [Six of Crows](#), which was incredible! I had not read this before. I thought that I was going to love one particular character, and then it turned out that I loved a different

character more particularly. There's a— I would say, there's a good bit of Alex-bait in this book?
Not as much—

F: Would someone like to briefly introduce this one? Just to explain to listeners who haven't read it, like, who it's by and what it's about?

A: *Six of Crows* is by Leigh Bardugo, and it is a second world fantasy set in— well, partially set in, kind of, fantasy-Amsterdam, which is very cool, and it is about— it's the first of a... trilogy, is it?

F: Duology.

A: Duology. Okay.

F: Yep.

A: And, it is about a team of young adults, they're all, like, seventeen-eighteen, which— whippersnappers—

M: But they're not.

F: Even though, they're really not. They're at least in their mid-twenties, they're just "seventeen".

M: They all have way too much backstories, and way too few parents to be in their teens.

A: Yes, agreed. I think that they were put in their teens so that this book could be sold as YA, even though—

F: Essential!

A: — It's not really— they're not really— but hey, that's how the industry works, what're you going to do? So it is about Kaz Brekker, who is a classic mastermind, and I'm not sure if I can even—

M: I would say it's a prison-break heist, right?

A: It is a prison-break heist -- sorry, I got derailed for a second there, because I was trying to think of his [Sorting Hat Chats](#) taxonomy, and I was thinking, "Is he a pure Slytherin?" I guess so.

M: No...

F: This is why we got distracted/overlapped in our taxonomies earlier, dear listeners, because we've been trying to think about, "Can you break down grifters into Slytherins, and masterminds into Ravenclaws, or is it more complicated than that? And isn't it sad that there are no thieves,

or hitters, or hackers among the three of us?” But that’s what you get when you have three Slytherins on a podcast.

M: I can double-class hacker, if I have to–

A: Yeah.

M: – I would argue that Kaz Brekker is probably a Ravenclaw secondary, because he isn’t adaptable, so much as he plans.

A: Yeah, that’s what I was, sort of, developing in my mind, that’s what I was saying–

M: He’s Freya, but like, wayyy more kneecapping, than I am aware of.

A: So much kneecapping–

M: – From Freya.

A: Just a lot of kneecapping in this book.

F: I could have a secret double life of kneecapping, and you would never know.

M: I would believe you, I mean you’re a doctor, you would know how.

A: It’s true.

F: That’s true. I’d have good aim.

M: Please could you do me a huge favour, and not discover your secret passion for kneecapping until I’ve left? That would be lovely.

F: The trials you ask of me, Macey.

M: I like my kneecaps. I have uses for them.

F: Macey wakes up in the middle of the night, Freya standing by the bedside, contemplative expression on her face–

M: Like, NO!

A: So, about your kneecaps–

F: Are you sure you need *both* of those, Macey? [Laughs]

M: Anyway.

F: Couldn't you just get by with *one*? [Laughs]

M: Anyway, I wanted to note something about *Six of Crows*, there was— and it was kind of what I was saying a moment ago, about them having so much backstory. There's a delightful amount of character work in this book.

A: Mmm. Yeah.

F: Mmm.

M: Everyone is real motivated, but it's all really fascinating interlocking... I was particularly charmed by the backstory romance between two of the characters, between [Mattias] and Nina, who is a Grisha? Is that how we pronounce that? A magician—

A: Yeah, Grisha.

M: — A mage in this world.

F: I was impressed by the fact that Bardugo managed to pull off a couple of quite complicated heist plots, but also give you six quite distinct character journeys.

M: Yes!

A: Mmmhmm.

F: It's a thick book for a YA book, but she gets a lot done on the page.

A: She really really does, and I was not expecting to have each of the chapters be from a different person's perspective, but it's super effective. And, it really... like, there's no way to do character work without— I mean, the best way to do character work is to get inside someone's head, and to see things— to see the world the way they see it. And having each chapter be from a tight third-person, centered on a different character is a brilliant way to do that.

F: It's also an excellent way to do a multi-person heist narrative.

A: Yes!

M: Mmhmm.

F: Because it gets as close as you can as what you see in the *Ocean's* movies where you sometimes just have one person doing a task, and you may not see the entire context, but you're seeing them off alone, doing their own parts of the heist. Which if you've only got one or two point of view characters, or at least a third person that's quite tight on one person in a book, for example, you can't necessarily see all the moving parts. And it also means that because different people are aware of different parts of it, or only Kaz has the whole story, there is a lot of secrets being kept, which makes for really good tension.

M: But I actually it's secrets being kept so much as it is misdirection for the audience, because you don't want to be in the mastermind's point of view for particular pieces of it, you don't want to be in the person plotting within the con, like, you wouldn't want to be in Jesper's head when Jesper was betraying them, for example, if he was the one point of view character. That would ruin the book! So, it's a great sleight of hand trick.

F: I think I talked about this when we were talking about [Machiavellian characters](#)—

M: Yes!

F: About the downsides of being in a mastermind's head.

M: Yes! We have one more tentpole to talk about, don't we, and I think, Freya, weren't you going to introduce this one?

[32:02]

F: Yes. So the last tentpole is a duology of fan fics that are very tightly linked so I think you can read them... you should read them both together cause the second one comes on very tightly from the events of the first one. So these are a pair of *Inception* fanfics called "[Palm. Ditch. Steal](#)" and "[Load. Misdirection. Switch](#)" by [imperfectcircle](#). They are *Inception* post-movie team fics as a lot of the *Inception* fanfic is. The pairings, if you care about these things, are Arthur/Eames and Ariadne/Saito. I love these stories. I think they do a lot of character work but also have a lot of interesting things to say about both heists and cons. And they really take advantage of the speculative conceit that the movie *Inception* brings up—

M: Mhmm.

F: —This idea of mind-heist and stealing ideas and influencing people and the possibilities of what can be done to someone in a level that is unreal.

M: Mhmm...

F: And that was what I really liked about these two. Especially that, again it does that character work. So the first one is all narrated by Arthur, the second one is all narrated by Ariadne. And

even then, the team is aware of the overarching plot and what is actually going on in these cons. But the narration doesn't quite let it through. So it shows you a way of using fairly tight third person that gets so deep into a person's emotions, that it's almost its own way of misdirection. You really care about the relationships and the personalities and what's going on here and so you don't quite notice that they're all not giving you the information until the end, which I think is very clever.

M: *Inception* fandom is an interesting one to do fic in, because the characters are such liars that you can do a lot with them. You can almost anything with them. I did find that these fics were a little more heavy on the relationship stuff, and that I wasn't entirely sure that there was enough con for my mood.

A: Mhm...

[34:02]

M: Like, I wanted to have more details about how the heist was working but it was also, fascinatingly I would say, tying how you pull a con or a heist—how you'd pull a con, more so—as a parallel to the relationships that the point of view characters were having in each of them because you get both of them, both Arthur and Ariadne, are in these relationships. They're not entirely stable, they're not entirely sure where they're going, and they're trying to pull these tricks that they would use during a con on their erstwhile partners.

F: And one of the things about the *Inception* team is that they have those very clearly defined roles: sort of the point man, the forger, the architect, that do not map directly to the con roles of grifter... he's a hacker, but there is still a taxonomy of deceit in this particular world. What I like about reading the fic is that this infiltrates character voice. In the second one, Ariadne notices things in terms of architecture.

M: Mhm.

F: A lot of the personal detail has a lot to do with the way things are constructed, and she thinks in quite concrete, sophisticated, fitting things together, in almost engineering kind of terms. Whereas Arthur's is more sort of obsessive about detail. And I think if you use those... that kinds of narrative again, it's not quite a misdirection, it's a way of showing you the same things happening using different people's kind of narration, which I always love. What did you think about the point that the second one made about a heist versus a con and the point of a long con?

M: I don't think I agree with Yusuf. So the point that it made was that one of the characters, Yusuf, who is a more experienced con man in the movie, he asks the others what makes a con, and they all make terrible—

F: –What’s the cardinal rule. What’s the cardinal rule of a long con.

M: Yes, what’s the first rule of a long con, and he says the first rule of a long con is knowing what you want. Which, I mean I kind of agree with in general for *life*.

A: Yeah, yeah.

[35:38]

M: But I don’t know that that’s distinct from the rest, that... yes .

A: If it’s drawing a parallel between a long con and a relationship, then yes, particularly, because knowing what you want when you go into a relationship is really important. Otherwise you just sort of blunder around and run into walls.

F: And that is quite explicit, that that mirroring of the relationship is in the second story.

M: Right. I think that’s the key for it for me in these fics and where they are interesting which was... I did not find the pairing of the second one compelling. [Laughs guiltily] Which, that’s a personal thing and I could see how it would land a lot better if you did. But I also wanted to talk a little bit about teams, if we can?

A: Yeah!

M: Cause I have a corner.

F: Go for it.

A: Yes! You had a corner! Go ahead and tell us about your corner.

M: Do you wanna? So, so dear listeners I have been taunting my fellow serpents with my desire for this particular corner for a couple of days now. Welcome, welcome, to Macey’s Corporate Bullshit Corner.

A: This is just another one of those episodes which is just full of corners all over the place.

M: So many corners! It’s for all of our thieves to hide in. Gotta have a shadow. Gotta have a blindspot in the cameras! So. Okay! How much to you know about corporate team building theory?

A: Uhh, my day job occasionally hosts corporate team building events where I watch people playing in an escape room and I tell them how they did good and how they did bad, and where they can do better.

M: [affirming reptile noise] Very nice.

A: And I use buzzwords like *synergy*. I don't know...

[F laughs]

M: Do they tip you better when you say synergy repeatedly?

[37:43]

A: Oh, I don't get tips.

[sad noises]

M: So.... There is a [theory of the phases of team formation](#) and team execution that's from the 60s. It posits that there are 4 phases of a team. And they are, because we love our rhyming bullshit in corporate land: forming, storming, norming, and performing.

A: Okay. Fuck this [said with big mood]. Fuck all of this.

F: I have heard that.

[vaguely maniacal giggling from Macey]

F: Someone has pulled that on me at a work thing before.

M: Alex has something to say about that.

A: I hate it is what I have to say.

[F&M giggle maniacally at A's pain]

M: But it's relevant!

A: It's bad naming.

F: It's the word "norming" that...

M: [Continues to giggle with sick glee] Yes

F: It really... gets into your teeth and tastes horrible.

A: First it was the rhyming, because whenever corporate people try... this is a rhetorical thing. We could do a whole episode on rhetoric that is just me ranting for an hour about rhetoric.

[amused laughing continues in the background]

[38:40]

A: You can overuse a trick. You know? Like you can overuse it.

M: We're going to talk about why—

A: “Norming” [said with deep revulsion]

M: —I give a shit about this.

A: Ok. [with skeptical trust]

M: I can break the *Ocean's 8* movie, for example, down into these phases!

[awkward pause]

A: [with a mixture of anger and horror and dread] Fascinating.

F: [with curiosity] Please proceed.

M: And I argue—

A: I am so looking forward to this... Sorry, go ahead [with affection]

[weird noise and accompanying laughter]

M: ‘Forming’ is the gathering of the crew phase. ‘Storming’ is overcoming their objections and figuring out how to work as a team. And that one’s kind of glossed over in the film, I think. ‘Norming’ is them kind of getting the heist in gear and ‘performing’ is when everything comes together and it all works great. Particularly I feel in one-shot heist media, so novels and films, a lot of the focus and tension and enjoyment is found in the team formation and the interpersonal dynamics. For me that was something I loved in *Ocean's 8*, something I loved in *Six of Crows* and something I feel like... I think that with *Inception* fanfic it fails to compensate for the lack of that tension and drive, sometimes, with something else “more interesting.” Whereas something like [Leverage](#) or another serial heist set-up, knows that it won't have that team to lean on, that team-formation tension and has found another plot engine. And fic needs to do that but doesn't always successfully manage to.

A: Mh-hmm.

M: And sometimes it will substitute the relationship part instead.

F: So what if not the relationship part? What is the plot engine that *Leverage* has in its later episodes? Because I would argue that it *is* the relationship between the characters.

M: No! But I would argue that... When I'm saying relationship, I mean romantic relationship, that fic leans on that very strongly. I think that if you do not have the tension of new interpersonal dynamics and navigating a new thing with secrets being revealed all the time, you need a cast-iron action plot. You need a *good* heist, you need a *good* trick, you need a *good* theft, and you need a problem of the week. So it substitutes in the murder mystery thing for the team formation thing.

F: So I think most of the *Inception* fic that I've read does have the element of secrets being revealed. Like, there's always something about this is a fairly new team and they're finding out something about... either their back story or the way that they work, and that influences relationship formation. And so yes, you're right, often the plots are not as well thought out as *Leverage* plots with a few exceptions, but they do have that newness of relationship and newness of interpersonal secrets. The ones that I've read, at least.

M: I think that it's never, though, for me, satisfyingly 'team,' as much as it's focused on two people because that's how fic focuses.

F: Okay! So if you're looking for a particular type of *team* feeling then.

M: Yeah, well that's what I'm saying with the team formation it's about the group dynamic, not individual, one-to-one interpersonal dynamics. What do you think?

F: Alex.

M: Yes. You haven't said anything in ages. [Laughs anxiously, possibly wondering if her corporate rhyming broke Alex]

[Long silence, punctured only by a deep inhalation]

F: Alex is just so unimpressed that we're talking about *Inception* at all.

A: Well, here's the thing. It's not that I'm unimpressed. It's just that when *Inception* came out everyone was talking about *Inception*, and I decided I wanted nothing to do with *Inception* and so I resisted heartily anything to do with *Inception*. [Laughter tinted with painful irony] And it seems like from the trailers and snippets I have seen, it seems like there's a lot of symbolism

and shit. And it's clearly one of those fandoms where there's a lot of tokens that everybody knows and uses—

[noises of polite disagreement]

A: —and kind of language? Okay, so this is the first *Inception* fanfic I've ever read—

F: I might have not have suggested these fics if I had known that you had not seen *Inception*.

A: Oh. I thought I mentioned that. That's okay though. Like, usually I really do really well with just being able to hop into a fandom and read fic no problem. Like, whatever, I do that all the time. I think this was a case where having several other *Inception* fanfics to read before I read this one would have been helpful for me to be able to parse what I was reading.

F: You're right. I think it is quite a symbolic piece of media and so the fic does lean quite heavily into inference and symbolism and leaving things unsaid.

A: Yeah.

F: Because the dreams in it are all about people's relationships and personalities and secrets and fears being represented concretely, and the fanfiction very much reflects that.

A: Yeah, so as I was reading this I was like, I can tell that there's something going on but I don't speak this language yet. [Sad, confused laughter]

F: That's fair.

A: It was pretty though, I mean even though I didn't understand what was going on, I could read it and understand, "Oh I can tell that the fic writer is doing something cool here!" I just don't know what it is..? What is the shape of this thing?

M: I find it really interesting though, that so many of the movies and media around heists and cons have always been very modern day. *Inception* is definitely in the here and now; *Leverage* is very much here and now; and a lot of the thriller-style cons and heists are not genre fic, so I was super excited to see all of this *Six of Crows* and some other things along those lines in fantasy start tying in with actual thieves, and spies, and cons and this makes me super happy, but I have a question for you two.

A: Okay, tell us your question.

M: Is the [Belgariad](#) a heist sequence?

A: I don't... Have I read...?

F: Oh, you are really playing on my memory here. It's been a *very* long time since i've read the *Belgariad*.

A: I'm trying to remember if I've ever read the *Belgariad*...

F: *The Belgariad* is the series of books by [David Eddings](#). Five books? *The Belgariad*? And then it was five books for the [Malloreon](#), the sequel series?

M: Yes.

[44:43]

F: Honest to God, all I can remember is that there is a shiny stone, because every David Eddings series has a shiny stone that they have to acquire.

M: Let me ask a more classic version of my question, then.

A: Okay.

M: Is [the Lord of the Rings](#) a heist sequence in reverse?

A: I knew you were going there. I would say... that's a very interesting question. Let me ponder that for a hot second here.

[M cackles]

A: I think it is.

F: It has those team dynamics, it has the forming, the norming, the storming, kind of—

A: Yeah, and they—

F: —The sort of performing—

M: It has the hitter, it has the mastermind, it has the spy—

A: Uh huh? And they have to sneak into a place.

M: You have to sneak into a place.

A: They have to sneak into a place to do a thing.

M: Yes. So, what I am arguing is that a lot, a lot, a lot of classic high fantasy quest sequences, the quest is a heist.

A: Yeah, actually, yeah.

M: You're heisting from a dragon. But it's a heist.

A: Yeah.

F: Although *The Hobbit* is definitely a heist.

A: [The Hobbit](#) is definitely a heist.

F: Yeah yeah.

A: The Hobbit is 100% a heist.

F: Alex and I said that at exactly the same time.

M: Alex, do you remember Silk from *the Belgariad*?

A: I don't think I have read any of the *Belgariad*.

M: I'm pretty sure— they're the David Eddings. You said that you—

A: I have read one David and Leigh Eddings book, and I don't— when I was like twelve years old, and I don't remember what it was.

F: Oh, was that the [Redemption of Althalus](#)? Because *that* is a heist.

M: One of the things that David Eddings has in his quest structure, which is kind of one of the prototypical, "You are the Boy King! You will go reclaim your throne!" fantasy sequences, there's always a pickpocket character, as part of the quest gang—

A: Hmm.

F: Hmmm.

M: I think that's fairly typical, actually. There's always "The Tricky One"—

A: Yeah.

M: — In a high fantasy heist— high fantasy *quest* team, sorry.

A: The rogue!

M: Yes!

F: I think it is, it's always a quest, so I'd put that around– I would argue that a heist is a specialised form of quest, where the whole point is you have to remove something, cause you were saying that the heist is about the removal of something.

A: You're blowing my mind right now! I just realised that every D&D game, *every* D&D campaign...

M: Yeah!

A: ...Is also a heist.

M: Yeah! Well, sometimes you have to kill someone instead, and I will argue that a murder is never a heist.

A: Yes, that's an assassination.

F: You are taking a life, you are heisting a life.

M: [As a dog owner to a bad puppy] No!

A: No, Freya, no.

[Laughter]

F: Oh, come on.

M: Freya, Freya, if you heist my kneecaps, I'm still not your friend.

[Laughter]

M: I will not be charmed by that. No, son. No.

A: Yeah, Yeah.

[Laughter]

M: So that was my, like, "I will blow your minds with this" realisation, which is that the classic fantasy quest sequence is frequently a heist.

A: Yeah.

F: Yep. It's often "there's a shiny rock you've got to get your hands on!"

A: Yeah, get the Macguffin.

F: And/or dump in the volcano.

M: And so, I am super excited to watch people actually realise this, and start writing books like they realise this, also, I really want to write my necromancer heist book sometime.

A: Hell, yeah.

F: Yeah.

A: So, F—

F: Yeah, we all have heists that we want to be working on.

A: Freya—

F: Yeah?

A: Freya, speaking of heists that we want to be working on, Freya—

F: Yes!

A: I think that you also have a corner this episode, do you not?

F: Indeed I do. So this is—

A: Tell us about your corner.

F: – Freya's Ravenclaw Organizational Corner. Which is secretly, cunningly, in disguise, it is the craft corner. So it is saying, from a writing perspective, how do you go about building a heist plot?

M: Also, for reference, from a planner's writing perspective, while Alex and I sit here and make vaguely burbling noises from the pantsner corner about "but... but... but..."

F: [mimicking] "But, but, but!"

M: –And like gaze adoringly at Freya, like, “You do magic!”

A: [laughs] I have had to force myself to get more on the planner side of things–

M: Same!

A: But I am classically a pantsner.

M: Same.

F: So I’m in the early stages of planning an actual heist novel, which I’m not allowed to work on, until I’ve written at least two other novels, but–

A: That’s a mood.

F: – I have actually fully planned a heist story, which was a [Merlin fanfic](#), which was a about heists, which is the only thing of mine, on archiveofourown that is unfinished, but I *planned*—

M: Ah, that’s why I haven’t read it.

F: —You haven’t read it ‘cause it’s unfinished, but it’s very old, I gave up on it, but I had planned the entire heist, I can tell you the outline, you can read the first chapters, and I can tell you everything that happens in this heist. And the way that I did it, was by using spreadsheets. [Said with a tone of smug satisfaction]

M: Oh God.

A: Oh!

F: Because that’s the Ravenclaw way.

A: How wonderful! [sarcastically]

F: So, essentially, if you are building a heist plot, you need to have a series of obstacles, and then you have to have a series of solutions to those obstacles. So you essentially need to make a list. And the obstacles can be as detailed as, “If we need to get into this bank vault, we need to: get past this security guard, we need to somehow overcome the security cameras, we then need to get past this combination lock, we then need to overcome the laser grid by using [Parker](#)-type yoga, we then need to,” you know, so forth and so forth. And that’s for the entire heist. You have a list of obstacles. And then in the next column, you put– Macey, you have like disappeared from view–

A: Macey died, Macey just died.

[Laughter]

M: I'm so tired, by all of this planning, I want a nap!

[Laughter]

F: Okay, so once you have your list of obstacles, the next step is—

A: I'm interested! I like spreadsheets.

F: — a list of solutions! And the solutions can, again, be as wacky, or as straightforward as you want. So what you are doing is essentially what the mastermind does, you are looking at the blueprints and the security plans and saying “How do I overcome each of these?” At a certain point, you also have to mark down which of these obstacles are expected, so you have a list of expected obstacles that the mastermind knows about at the beginning, and then you have unexpected obstacles, which are things that will crop up during it, but then have to be overcome.

A: Complications.

F: And so the difference between your solution columns—

M: Are those the unknown unknowns?

F: They are the unknown unknowns. So the different solution columns will be Ravenclaw solutions, the planned solutions, and the Slytherin solutions, which is the “If this thing popped up in the middle of the con, how would this team deal with it?” And you have to know that, as the writer. And then, you decide, of all the ones that are unknown unknowns, with improvised solutions, or unknown unknowns that look like they're crises, how much of them are *actually* planned for, and part of the con. And you have to make a decision when you are planning, is this a clockwork con, where every possible obstacle that comes up, or every problem that arises is actually part of it, and has been planned for, and the mastermind knew all along, and you're somehow going to turn it into a plus, or is it something that actually comes up that was not foreseen, and they have to deal with it on the spot, showing Slytherin skills rather than Ravenclaw skills? So you end up with a few different columns, and then once you've got that, if you're me, you turn around and look at your characters and go, “Right, now I have to come up with character beats, and then you come up with character beats, and then you look at your two spreadsheets, and you go “How can I smush these together in a satisfying way?”

[A laughs]

F: For example, how will... How can I use this character who needs to overcome this particular character point, or for these two characters whose relationship needs to become closer, which of these obstacle solutions can I map that onto, in an interesting way? So how is this person being in danger—

A: My god! [Laughter]

F: —going to make that person that's in love with them realise that they're in love with them? And then you just overlay your spreadsheets in your mind, somehow, and then you make a scene outline. And then you start writing. Ta-da! [Laughs]

[52:22]

M: Can I cancel my necromancy novel before I start it?

A: Can you cancel it?

M: No, that sounds exhausting.

A: No, cause I want to read it! Have you guys seen that tumblr post, which is how to do art, like how to draw an owl. [F&M laughter like death is at your door and only laughing can save you] And first you draw two circles, and then you draw the rest of the owl—

F: —And draw the rest of the... [fades to laughter]

[laughter subsides into giggles as the serpents get in their ab workout for the day]

F: Are you saying that my beautiful explanation was not gonna be something that you can just turn around and duplicate immediately?

A: Well... [laughter]

M: It's actually not, and I know for a fact because I know me that that would kill the book. Cause if i have a scene-by-scene outline, I cannot write even a short story. I can't do it. It kills it.

F: Well, see. My scene-by-scene outline will be a few dot points. So there will be this scene where they go to the museum and set up something in the computer system. The next scene is... And then I'll have a couple points about what happens, character wise. A scene outline is like a couple of sentences per scene—

M: Oh, I know. And I don't know why it does it, but *for me*, anything more detailed than, like, the main action points across the whole book is too detailed and I can't write it.

F: Whereas for me if I start writing without one of those outlines, then I can't maintain word count. I have a really good detailed scene-by-scene outline then I can just start and then keep throwing words at it and eventually I will get to the end. And occasionally you'll realize that a scene needs to be removed or changed in some way but mostly it works for me.

A: I used to be very much on the Macey side of things where I kept trying to do outlines because I thought outlines would be a helpful tool, and it killed the book, over and over again. And then one day I sorta came up with my own very personal idiosyncratic way of doing outlines and now I'm more on the Freya side of things, where, if I do it this one particular weird way that works for me, using this one particular style that I came up with for myself, then it works and it helps, and it's just like a grocery list. I've already made all the hard decisions. Making decisions is a terrible thing. It's the worst part. It's awful.

F: And look, I have nothing against pantsers. I think sometimes you have to pants to be—

A: —Yeah. Oh yeah. Absolutely.

F: — creative, but a heist plot I would find extraordinarily difficult to pants.

M: I now really want to know how Leigh Bardugo did *Six of Crows*, because it just has so many characters and so many character beats and so many moving parts that I'm fascinated.

A: She had to have outlined it.

F: There must be a spreadsheet. There must be five spreadsheets.

A: Or she did a hella murder board afterward.

M: [with disturbing enthusiasm] YES murderboards!

F: It's true, I am coming at it from the point of view of someone who hates editing.

M: [sputters with shock] I love editing!

F: So I much prefer to frontload all of my effort, rather than pants my way through and then turn around and go okay how do I then... structure this?

M: Yeah.

F: But also because you have to lay Easter eggs for heists. You have to lay hints early on, like with murder mysteries. You have to know the pieces of the puzzle so you so you can lay hints of them. And I am much too impatient to go back and do that in an edit. I'd rather just have all of

the pieces in my head to begin with so I know what the shape of it is. So that I can just start dropping hints wherever I like.

M: I think for me as well though it might also be a really mental block thing and what I need to do is... quietly sidle up to plotting sideways while not meeting its eye—

A: Yeah. That's what I did [laughs with relief as they confess their sins] that's what I did.

M: —and if I write it down, it's broken. If I admit that I'm doing it, it's broken. But if I do it like, "I'm just talking about my book with friends!" that doesn't count.

[A is either crying or laughing with the relief of being seen]

F: Well, we are going to a degustation dinner with matched wines tonight. I'm pretty sure two glasses in you and planning will be holding hands—

M: Yes! Drunk planning!

F: And grinning at each other across the table. I can make this happen. It'll be great.

M: Someday, when we are famous and fabulous, we should do a bonus episode that is just us getting tipsy and planning a novel from scratch.

A: Oh my god. Yes.

M: From like flashcard ideas.

F: Yes.

M: Wouldn't that be amazing? We can like... Our listeners can help us with ideas and prompts and we can pull them out of a hat and it will be very silly.

F: We can do mad libs novel building!

M: [squeaks] yes

A: We'll do some kind of workshop on Patreon or something.

M: But we can't do self-insert heists because we are all mastermind grifters and that heist would fall apart so fast.

A: Yeah, it would. Yeah it would.

F: Yeah. Someone would come up to us and we'd be like... who's gonna punch them for us? And we'd all just stand there uselessly not punching them.

A: Yeah

M: Nobody. Oh no, you don't have to punch if you can seduce.

[A laughs]

[56:57]

[outro music]

M: Hey everybody, thanks for joining us for this episode of Be The Serpent, a podcast of extremely, extremely deep literary merit. Honestly I love heists. And cons! What a great plot structure, right? What fantastical setting couldn't be livened up with a good heist AU. And even Pratchett loved a con--it seems like everywhere I turn, there's another example! I shouldn't get TOO enthusiastic, though. Or Alex might actually take steps to form that heist crew they've been talking about. And Rowland's Three doesn't have quite the same ring to it, does it?

Anyway, we have some even more exciting topics to talk about in upcoming episodes! On the next episode, two weeks hence on October 10th, we'll be discussing OT3s! You know, the Best Possible Ending for any and all love triangle? If you want to prepare in advance, one of the tentpoles for that episode is the White Collar fic, "[Always Starts The Same, with a Boy and a Girl](#)", by lightgetsin. So if you have a friend who is into stuff like that, maybe give them a head's up!

In the meantime, feel free to continue the conversation with us! Remember that we're actually about to record our next Extravaganza! So do feel free to send us questions for that, at serpentcast@gmail.com. Otherwise, if you've got any other breathless adulations, reach out to us @serpentcast on twitter and tumblr, or join in the conversation in our fan Discord chat, linked on the About the Show page of our website. If you enjoy the podcast, remember to review us on iTunes! And by the way, I'd never try to con you. You're far too smart for that.

What We're Reading:

[Jane Doe](#) by Victoria Helen Stone

[A Conspiracy of Truths](#) by Alexandra Rowland

[Witchmark](#) by CL Polk

[1688: A Global History](#) by John E. Wills Jr.

Other Stuff We Mentioned:

[Revenge](#)

[Nirvana in Fire](#)

[Guardian](#)

[Wynonna Earp](#)

["The Great Chinese Art Heist"](#) article in GQ

Alex's loathing of stage magicians

[Now You See Me](#)

[Sorting Hat Chats](#)

[Episode 13 of Be the Serpent- Machiavellian Overthinkers](#)

[Imperfectcircle](#)

["Palm, Ditch, Steal"](#) by imperfectcircle

["Load, Misdirection, Switch"](#) by imperfectcircle

[Inception](#)

[Tuckman's stages of group development](#)

[Leverage](#)

[The Belgariad](#) by David Eddings

[Malloreon](#) by David Eddings

[The Lord of the Rings](#) by J.R.R. Tolkein

[The Hobbit](#) by J.R.R. Tolkein

[Redemption of Althalus](#) by David and Leigh Eddings

["Miss the Train Before"](#) by Fahye (incomplete)

For Next Time:

[Always Starts the Same. with a Boy and a Girl](#) by lightgetsin