

Episode 1

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Nathan

Welcome to our first full episode of the fantasy review podcast where the page is only the beginning. My name is Nathan Klembara. I am a blogger and reviewer at thefantasyreviews.com and I am joined as always by my cohost James who is the author of No Heart for a Thief. James, how are you doing today?

James

I'm doing well. I mean, I'm I'm glad to be home after a long day of work. And happy to be talking to you. What have you been reading lately?

Nathan

Let's see. So actually, just this morning before I left for work, I finished Paladin unbound by Jeff Speight. I don't know how to pronounce his last name.

James

I'm not sure either. I've been hearing good things about it. And yeah, it just came out?

Nathan

Yeah, just came out are just coming out. It's either March or April. But it's a fun d&d adventure. If you're somebody who just wants that, let's get the band together. And let's go on adventures. It's definitely like the book for you. There's a lot of side quests. There's a lot of like mini villains that they have to tackle throughout. So I really enjoyed it. It's a quick read. It was a fast read. I finished it in like two days. I just finished that one. Earlier in the week I finished Shannon Chakraborty, her new book The Adventures of Amina Al-Sirafi.

James

Oh, that's such a beautiful cover. That's all I know about it is it's a beautiful cover.

Nathan

It's a pirate, nautical fantasy, in which there's a woman she's probably like middle aged, and she's a retired pirate and she gets pulled back in for one last heist one last adventure to save this young girl who has been kidnapped by this. I think he's a European guy. The actual book is set on the coasts of the Indian Ocean in the 12th century. So is a really great, fun adventure. In this kind of Muslim Arabic world that we don't often see depicted in fantasy.

James

Yeah, I'm in a bit of a reading slump, I have been pushing my way through a slog with I've been trying to finish *The First Binding*, it's very beautifully written, I'm enjoying the the story, the characters, I'm enjoying the setting. And so it's, it's really this, the thing is, it's too reminiscent of *The Name of the Wind* for me. And it's it hits all the same story beats and to the point where I'm like, I know this exact scene from *The Name of the Wind*. And that really throws me off with like falling into the story. So it feels like it's *The Name of the Wind*, but set in an Indian fantasy setting, which is really cool. So if you haven't read *The Name of the Wind*, I think you're gonna love it. But if you have read *The Name of the Wind*, and you remember the book at all, you're gonna be like, I know exactly this plot point. And I know what comes next. And I'm guessing this is what comes next. I've heard there's an amazing ending. I'm kind of trying to push my way to get to that. But it's, it's really slowed me down. I've gotten through a couple of audiobooks lately. So I finished the *Threadlight* series not too long ago, on audiobook and that was great. But I've been having a hard time with physical books because I have a hard time DNFing.

Nathan

I'm the same way I cannot will myself to DNF most of the time. I hate that about myself, because I feel like there's so many good books out there that I'm not getting to because I'm slogging through the bad ones. But sometimes I feel like I can't give up. And what was that last week or the week before I finished reading *The Stars Undying* by Emory Robin, I think is the author, which is kind of like a space opera queer retelling of Julius Caesar Antony and Cleopatra, and I hated this book for the first 100 pages, like I don't know why I kept going. But then I loved the last 400 pages. I was totally on board. And so that's just reinforced in my brain like do not do that. Because you never know when that's going to happen.

James

I'm having the opposite experience. I loved the beginning of this book. And they were parts that diverged away from *The Name of the Wind*. And now it just it feels like it diverged enough just to come right back in lineup. And so I'll probably pushed myself through at some point. There's a novella, I really want to get to, I think it's called *the Black God's Drums* that I really want to get into. And so maybe I'll just kind of pause on the first binding and move to that for a moment.

Nathan

Yeah. novellas are one of my favorite things to get up reading slumps, because you just kind of power through them. And they're done.

James

Yeah, they're 100 pages.

Nathan

So should we get into it?

James

Let's do it. We've decided for the first episode tackle a really easy issue. We're going to talk about *Cancel Culture*. And I know this is what everybody's been waiting for two white guys giving their opinions on cancel culture. It's really important to hear our voices and since you can't all see the video, this is very much laced with sarcasm.

Nathan

But I think it's also cool for us to have this conversation, especially since with so much going on every day, it seems like every day on Twitter or Tik Tok, or whatever, there's a new, quote unquote cancel culture moment where some controversy is happening in the science fiction and fantasy space. So I think it'd be cool to just really dig into this topic.

James

I think the first question is cancel culture real? I think people push back against this and ask that question all the time. So is canceled culture real?

Nathan

I don't think it is in the way that most people think of canceled culture. I've heard the term used as an alternative cancel culture, which is accountability culture, which I think is a much better way of thinking about it, which is holding people and creators and authors and everybody else just accountable for the things that they do and the things that they write and the things that they say. And I think that's the most important element.

James

Yeah, I would say it's a rebranding of things that have already existed. So there's always been consequences for your actions, when you're speaking out in a public arena. To a certain extent, there's always been people making decisions, whether or not to consume media based on whether they like what's something that somebody has done, there's always been boycotts around media, when somebody goes steps outside of the norm, or breaks a law or does something offensive, and it's just been relabeled. I think there's a difference added to it based on the ubiquity of social media. And so that democratizes it in a way that I don't think has necessarily existed in the same way before, I do think there are elements of people using this ideology of canceled culture to make noise. And so potentially pointing things out to a greater degree than they need to be pointed out. But you know, everybody has their own barometer for what is offensive, what is not offensive, what should be the line, some people are willing to listen to an R Kelly song, even if their friend is triggered by it. And they'll say that's a personal choice, and others will make a judgment based on that personal choice you make. So I think there's just a level of there are consequences for everybody's actions, right. And the choices you make around media, say something about you, the choices you make around your willingness to consume certain media, in a public fashion, say something about how you want to interact with the public.

Nathan

I think your point there, especially about social media is like right on it, not only because it allows more voices into the conversation, which is usually a good thing, especially when it allows more diverse voices, who in the past haven't had a platform to talk about some of these biases, or some of these prejudicial elements like in the Harry Potter verse, where, you know, we'd never really had this conversation in the open about how goblins are an anti semitic

stereotype. I'm sure those things have existed before social media. But, you know, I grew up reading Harry Potter, and I never heard that until relatively recently. But I also think that there's the issue of making noise, as you said, just to make noise, because it gets you clout, and it gets you followers. And I think there might be a problem with that, where the more that you can complain about something, the more you can call out people about something, the more likes you're going to get, the more shares, you're going to get more followers you're going to get. And I think in some cases, people will say things just to get that follow to get that like, and I think that there might be a problem there. Because we do have to be careful about what we say and how we approach these things. Because we need to hold people accountable. But we also have to remember that these are like real people.

James

I mean, I want to pause and step back and think about the act of hold holding somebody accountable is an act of utilizing your power to whatever extent you have power, it is an act of utilizing your power. And some people just like to utilize their power. Some people, they you know, you say a wrong word that you don't actually know is offensive, or has connotations that that could be taken as problematic. And somebody loudly helped calls you out, because they want to be seen as having that righteousness. That that is a problem. But that's existed before canceled culture. It was termed, it was coined as a term that's just some people utilizing whatever space they have to be loud and in your face and in the spotlight. But that's not the majority of what's happening. That is the exception to the rule. But it's a very loud exception. So people are easy, you can easily point it out.

Nathan

And when we get this approach like this, and we take things to the extreme, I the thing about cancel culture is that we automatically go to the point where it's like that person their career is over. Like we don't allow people to say, Hey, I did wrong. We don't allow authors or other people in this community to learn or grow from those mistakes. And I think that's one thing that I'm always very careful about is at what level is what somebody did like, truly heinous enough, where we're saying, like, you're done, there's nothing you can come back from this. And at what point do we allow people to learn and grow from some of these things that they've said or done? And so whenever I see something, I'm always thinking, like, at what level? Where do we draw that line? And how do we even decide where that line is?

James

But I think it's also worth pointing out who's actually been, like, who's actually been affected by cancel culture. So you point out, you can point out, Louis C. K, you can point out you can point

out JK Rowling, you can point out, you know, multiple actors and actresses and people in the spotlight, who have been called out for sexual abuse and sexual assault who have been called out for racism, misogyny, who have been called out for a lot of very heinous things, and they still have their next acting job. You know, Louie CK, just released a CD. And didn't he win a Grammy last year,

Nathan

And Dave Chappelle just won a Grammy this year.

James

Yeah. So cancel culture seems to be a very good way of complaining to get a certain demographic of people to listen to you with even more fervor. So I also think it's a really calling a cancel culture is a response to accountability that people have found, if you use that, as as a as a call out, as you know, this is cancel culture, that's going to promote your voice in a new way. And that's going to get you even more readers. In some ways, I think, we saw that with JK Rowling and Hogwarts legacy that when trans people and the trans community and allies were like, JK Rowling has literally funded laws and has enacted and used her speech to hurt the trans community to promote violence, to promote this idea that trans people don't exist in the way that they say they exist. We as a community are asking you just just don't buy a game. And I think to a certain extent, that promoted the game, because people don't like being told no, even people who call themselves allies, were out there, streaming the game on Twitch and putting it on Tik Tok and all that, and they don't like being told no. So they do it even harder, that it's it's a sad side effect. And I think that has a lot to do with this pushback on cancel culture. And it being framed as this idea of a lack of freedom, when it's really just telling you, hey, this hurts us, please don't do it. And you have your choice, you can do it, or you cannot do it, just the simple ask of not doing something becomes this attack on freedom. And it is, it's just a sad reaction.

Nathan

The Howard legacy case is also so complex, because I've also heard a lot of voices from the trans community who are saying like, hey, we have no problem with this game, you know, and they're actually blaming cisgendered allies for making this a big deal when some parts of the trans community are saying it's not a big deal. Well, you have other people in the trans community saying it is a big deal. And it becomes this huge debate. And people kind of just go with the group that already fits, I think their preconceived notions about what's working. So I think that becomes a problem. And then you got people who will jump through hoops to justify any of their actions. Like there'll be like, Well, what about the game's creators, you know, because they're getting hurt if we don't buy this game.

James

And one of the game's creators that one of the head guys of the game is what a white supremacist and was canceled from it was removed from projects before this, because of his viewpoints around issues of race. So like, I'm not worried about him as creator, He's also already been paid. As many people have pointed out, you're right, you can't say that all trans people are against something or that any one community is going to move as a monolith. And so it just brings up a lot of complex things. I think you could say that about any one of the things that have been quote unquote, canceled by a community, there are going to be people in that community that don't want to cancel it. At the end of the day, you got to make your own moral judgments and you got to figure out how you're going to consume media. And when you do it publicly, it says something publicly so you get to decide what you want to communicate to the world. There's a difference between playing Hogwarts the legacy in the privacy of your own home and enjoying a game and going live on Twitch when people in your comments are saying like this is harmful. You yelling and screaming about it,

Nathan

The Hogwarts legacy thing I get why it's a complex issue for everybody on an individual basis for so many people, especially of a certain generation, the Harry Potter books were us growing up, they're such a big part of who we are, I was thinking about for the blog for the fantasyreviews.com of writing a series of the fantasy books that made me as a kid. And I was debating if I really wanted to even put the Harry Potter books on there, you know, because on one hand, they definitely did, I started reading them when I was like, eight years old or nine years old, when I remember, my aunt bought me the first two, but at the same time, they kind of have this taint on them now, because JK Rowling did say transphobic things. And when she was called out on it, she doubled down numerous times at this point. And as you start kind of going into her writing, and people start pointing out some of the other racist and stereotypical things in those books, it really does taint it. But at the same time, I get why people are so defensive of it, and protective of it, because we don't want to let that go.

James

And we are defensive. And we hold on to things that formulated us as a person. And arch is definitely a big part of who we are and how we became who we are, you have never not seen defense come up when it comes to art and the artists doing bad things. So we can jump back to Woody Allen, if you don't know what happened with Woody Allen, you can Google it, Woody Allen has done some horrific things, people will still live and die by his movies, they'll say Annie Hall is one of the best movies of all time. And I'm not willing to give that up. People grew up with listening to R. Kelly and love his music. And regardless of what he has done with young

children, young black children, specifically, people are still going to fight to keep that in their lives. Because it has it's emotionally connected to important moments in their lives. And I get that. But to a certain extent, we have to decide whether nostalgia is more important, or whether the people around us are more. And if you're bumping our Kelly really loudly. And your friend has a history of having similar types of abuse in their lives, they're probably not going to be your friend very long, because they're going to understand that you care more about your nostalgia than their comfort in your car. And so it's just all about making choices, I think, and we all have to make them think you have choices.

Nathan

It's also really interesting to see at what point the people at the top of these businesses, whether it's the people at the top of film studios, publishing houses, at what point they cut ties with these quote unquote, canceled celebrities. And when they hold on to them. You know, because we've had, we've seen a lot of cases where actors are fired from film projects, television projects, or publishers drop authors because of some of this stuff. But then you get the issue of like Ezra Miller in the flash ad, what Ezra Miller has done, it's there's numerous things in terms of violent acts, grooming behavior, and a lot of things

James

Ezra Miller is not even been charged with the crimes that there is a sorted amounts of evidence just online that you can look up admissions of guilt by their own social media presence is and they're not being held accountable, because it's simply more financially viable. And the financially there, there are financial incentives to keep them around. There are financial incentives to push this movie forward. Because let's be honest, the DCU has been suffering for a long time, it never really found its way. They're looking for the flash to set off a whole new universe. They need this movie to work. And so they chose finances over everything. And that's what businesses are going to do. The only reason that I think people have been dropped from jobs is because those businesses thought it was financially viable to do so. And that they were going to get they were going to lose more money by not doing so. But Kevin Spacey was dropped from a gig what, five years ago at this point?

Nathan

Yeah, House of Cards.

James

Yeah. House of Cards because he was because of the allegations of his sexual assault of a minor. He hasn't been around for a while. He's coming back now. Louie CK admitted to sexual harassment of his employees, and he's making his comeback. I don't think that there's any real cancellation. There's just when are they going to be financially viable again.

Nathan

With the Ezra Miller situation I have heard from people who are like part of screen audiences and things that the flash is probably the best DCEU movie that has been made and I think that's why they want to keep it around because people were really happy with it and they were really excited about it. But what's also been interesting about that is the trailer that I saw that aired before Ant Man, it featured more of Batman than Ezra Miller as The Flash, which I think was a very intentional move to try to, let's just get us because I think that movie comes out in July, or June or something, I think it was like, let's get us to another couple of months, and maybe the whole Ezra Miller situation will die down enough that people won't care anymore.

James

I'm personally not going to see the movie, if I do see the movie will be when it streams. And I don't even know if I'll watch it then. One, the DCU has not been, they have one movie that I'll watch again. And that is the Suicide Squad. That is the only movie of all of the movies they've put out that I've actually found. Good from start to finish. I think there are some highlights here and there. And I'm Aquaman I think that Shazam has its moments. The DCU is a boring mess of a uniform or a universe. You know, I don't think it holds water. I think they tried to compete with MCU. But they didn't know what they're doing. They didn't take their time. And they rushed into things. They did a poor job. Zack Snyder was not the person to make a universe around, he can make a good movie, but he also makes one very specific type of movie. And that's not lending itself to multiple directors building a universe around it. They they did not think it out. And so they're they're holding their hat on The Flash making this change for them, and giving it to James Gunn, I won't watch any DCU movies going forward, if they keep Ezra Miller as the Flash.

Nathan

Yeah. And also the fact that they hired James Gunn, who was also fired for a while from Guardians, I think it was volume three, the one that's coming out for a problematic behavior on set. And then they brought him back.

James

He was fired for some old tweets that were homophobic, right. And I think there was the pushback of these were years old. And he has since adapted his positions and changed his mind. And so I think it comes back to, there are things that we probably should be willing to let people grow from. But I also think at the time, you know, people were overreacting to this smallest thing, because they were so worried about canceled culture being bigger than it actually was. And so I think that happened with James Gunn, and happened with Kevin Hart, in the exact same way with the Oscars. Both of them have arguably had even bigger careers since then. So bigger career moments since then. So I think they're doing fine, and that that growth element is so important.

Nathan

And I think that brings up the whole TJ Klune and the house in this really antsy issue, which is that he said in an interview that he based this book on the Sixties Scoop, which was where in Canada and parts of the United States where indigenous children were taken from their families put in boarding schools or were put into white families and he made a cozy feel good fantasy about it. And you know, TJ Klune is a white American who does not identify as indigenous in any way. There's been a lot of conflict over will do: we just not like the book now, is TJ Klune canceled himself? What do we do about this? I think that the issue here is that TJ Klune has apologized. You know, TJ Klune has said that he realizes what he did was wrong, and he won't do it again. And so that puts me as a reader in an awkward position, because I don't know how I engage with his work anymore. And I think it also just exposes a whole new whole cozy fantasy genre that sometimes they take really dark things and try to make it feel good. And I don't know, because like the house initially and see, it's problematic because he is a white man using indigenous suffering to make money. But even his second book under the whispering door wasn't problematic. But it still turned something dark like death and tried to make it cozy. And it just didn't work either.

James

So here I'm coming at this, and I'm going to, you know, put it out there. My book, you know, no, Hartford thief is featuring black and brown characters. It discusses colonialism, if the only white characters on page are the colonialist regime, and you don't spend much time with them. It's really focused on these characters who are experiencing colonialism. And I have had a lot of internal debates on it has nothing to do with canceled culture and how it will be received. It has to do with whether or not that is my place to write a book about that. I came down to the idea that I think if white writers should be having discussions on race because white supremacy affects us all and we need to deal with that through our art as well. But we need to do so in a very particular way. We need to do research on what we're talking about. We need to do so with

an open mind to accountability, we need to be able to adjust and do better. We need to not put our voices out. First and foremost, there are steps that I think white writers can do to engage in these conversations. But turning an atrocity into a cozy fantasy moment is not the way to go about it. Everybody will have their own barometer on whether they're still willing to read TJ Clune. And I think some people he's off their list, and other people, they're good with an apology. I think the thing is, there are people who are looking for a rulebook, and there's no rulebook, there's nobody who's going to tell you, yes, you can do this, or no, you can't do this. And it's going to be okay with everybody else, you have to be okay with your decisions being your decisions, and some people not liking them.

Nathan

And there's a big difference between what you did in your book know, *No Heart For a Thief*, which is actually tackling these issues with characters of color versus taking these historical events and applying them to white characters and white problems. And we see that in a lot of, for example, dystopian novels

James

Yes

Nathan

Where, you know, we see a lot of white suffering people, you know, white people under like the thumb of some oppressive group. And it's just, it, that's where I think it becomes a little problematic as well. In your book, did you ever consider having like a sensitivity reader or using beta readers

James

I had sensitivity readers, beta readers of color, I had lots of different checks and balances in there, that I got a lot of positive feedback. But at the end of the day, it's my work. And I, it's the decisions I made around it. So I'm never going to say that I had a sensitivity reader, so I'm all good. There, there might be people that read my book and have a problem with a white man writing on the experiences of people. Now, it's not earth. So these have, people have not experienced the same exact kinds of suffering or moments in history, but they're experiencing colonialism. They're experiencing racism, they're experiencing these acts within this new world. And I am trying to do my best to humanize them in a way that makes them feel fully fleshed out and really examines the experience, because I wanted to address whiteness through literature

without centering white people at the forefront of it. But there will be people who are not okay with that. And they're not wrong, that's just they have a different perspective.

Nathan

And you know, they have the right to do so just kind of getting to that. A lot of the times in these these books with characters of color that are highlighted and featured, they're often also under just a whole lot more scrutiny by readers. There's these ideas that, you know, for example, a recent controversy was over the book, *The Blood Trials*, which is essentially in that Hunger Games genre, but written by a black woman, N.E. Davenport. And a lot of white readers were like, I didn't like this book, because I didn't like the main character because she was angry, and other people and the author herself were like, Yeah, because she experiences racism. And you know, you know, and so it's also about understanding and having empathy for people who have going through experiences that you might you yourself might not have gone through, and not judging the characters for that, and actually understanding that positionality. And that viewpoint.

James

I would, I would go a step further to say it's not even about the characters on page, it's about the writer behind the pen, I think that white writers are much more willing to give white authors the benefit of the doubt, there is an assumption of some, some white readers and some readers in general will assume a level of whatever it is professionalism, or skill set or talent based on whiteness, and that is an issue. So black authors have to go through more hoops, they're less likely to be represented by agents, they're less likely to be represented, find deals within the Big Five, they're less likely to find success within self publishing. I don't have the data on that. But I can tell you from the circles I run in, in self publishing, it is less likely that authors of color are getting the same kind of attention that white authors are. And at the same time, there's this weird conversation that people will say, well, publishing only wants authors of color now and it it's not supported by data is not supported by any kind of numbers is just completely this myth we've made up because now there are more authors of color than there used to be. So 1% has gone to 2% That does not mean it there that black authors or authors of color are taking over publishing. That means there's a little bit more room.

Nathan

If you look at even something like SPFBO, the self published fantasy blog off, I've been following it for a couple of years now, because I think it's a great way to get into and find new self published authors. Have any of them been Black? I know that there's been a couple of authors of color. But I don't know if there's been any Black authors in the finals, at least in the last couple of years that I've really been following it.

James

So I don't know, who all has one all the spiffed bow competitions, who I know that, you know, you have Sword of Kaigen which is written by ML Wang. You have last year was reign and...reign was in the title,

Nathan

Reign and Ruin? Ruin?

James

Yeah, yeah, you have a lot of great books in there. But I think you're right, there's there's definitely a lack of diversity there. But it's not just the authors that have a lack of diversity, there's a lack of diversity in the blogs that are represented in reviewing the books, which then leads down the pipeline to having lack of diversity in those books that are chosen to make the finals.

Nathan

It's also, as you mentioned earlier, just couple minutes ago, it's a pipeline issue, too. I think if you go through all of the books that are even submitted, you know, I don't know all of them. But the numbers that are probably being written by Black authors is probably really, really, really low. So it's not just a problem with all that stuff, always picking books by black authors. But those books don't exist, because those people aren't given the opportunities in order to do so.

James

And we can go down this long tangent, and there's going to be a dozen more connecting points to why that disparity exists. You know, self publishing is expensive to get editors to get cover designers to have beta readers if you're going to pay for them to have sensitivity readers to have marketing. And the list goes on. And the people with more access to disposable income and able to do that are more often white, because of the racism that is that our country is predicated on and the racism in other countries as well. And so this is not just a race issue, it is a it is a race issue. And it's a socio economic issue. It's who has time to actually sit down and write who has time to submit to all the agents who has time to submit to all these contests, who has the resources, and they have access points, who has mentors within the community that are going to help them advance their book, and who are going to push their narrative who has

bloggers behind them, that are going to read their arcs and review them and hype them up before their launch. There are so many reasons why you see a disparity. And there are people in the self publishing community that will say that self publishing is a leveling playing field. It's not, it's a microcosm of the larger publishing industry. And it exemplifies it in many different ways. And a lack of diversity is one of those ways.

Nathan

We can keep going on this, I think, for hours and hours. But I think that's a good place to wrap this up.

James

And if you want I can go get my soapbox and I can do some more. Yeah, yeah, it's a messy, it's a thorny issue. There's obviously no solution to this, but so that this podcast episode is not three hours long, I think that we should move it along to our dragon fire segment.

It is time for our first dragon fire where we take up to five minutes to tackle topic. And we'll be doing this for about 30 minutes. And as we roll along, if we run out of things to say about a topic we'll hop onto the next one is kind of our rapid fire q&a. We're just going to get into it and see what the other has to say about some fantasy topic.

AI Voice

Number one

Nathan

So for the first topic, we're going to be tackling the new glut of Lord of the Rings content that's probably coming our way. If you haven't heard Warner Brothers has announced that they are currently working on new Lord of the Rings films recently, a polygon article talked about how there are at least five Lord of the Rings video games coming out in the next couple of years. So James, do we need this much Lord of the Rings content?

James

Well, I think I already know your answer from you framing it as glut. So I think we're on a similar page. But honestly, I don't care. I don't care. They're going to make more Lord of the Rings content. They're going to make as much MCU content as possible. They're going to keep on making everything into its own cinematic universe until we stop attending the movies. And until we stop paying attention. It's financially viable for them, and they're going to make a lot of money off of it. At the end of the day. I don't care. I am not the biggest Lord of the Rings fan and this contents not for me, hey, maybe they'll make some great things, but I probably won't be the first in line to watch them.

Nathan

Yeah, and I have to blame a little bit the Tolkien estate themselves for this. And it's just the way that they've sold the rights. So like the rings of PowerShell. on Amazon, this company over here gets to make TV and movies, but only about the appendices. And these people over here get to make it only based off of this group of like words, and this group over here gets to work on this stuff. And it just makes everything feel so disjointed and oddly competitive, rather than it feeling like a cohesive Lord of the Rings universe. And I think that's why The Rings of Power show was actually really boring, because they were still restricted in what they were allowed to use and what they could do. But yeah, with Warner Brothers doing this, they've also said they want to make more Harry Potter content. And it's just comes down to the fact that we don't need more of it. And it's not that I say that all of its going to be bad, but they're just making it to make it because they have the IP and they have the rights.

James

As much as these companies train us on what media to consume, retrain them right back in terms of what we will go see. And these IPs are safe, they will have a viewership. And we've made that promise to them time and time again, because we watched the Rings of Power. As bad as it was, we watched it. And there were moments that were good, but it wasn't worth the time.

Nathan

And it looked beautiful.

James

I would also say you're doing being too fair to Amazon, by blaming the estate for the amount of horrible writing that went into that show. Yes, they were very limited in what they could do. But at the same time, that writing was awful.

Nathan

I think that had writers, this was like their first major TV project. Like they took no like pretty much people with no experience and gave them what \$5 billion and said make a TV show.

James

I guess that makes sense. Given that, you know, Jeff Bezos has no history of space travel, but he built himself a spaceship. So you know, why not give the people who have no knowledge of something the reins to all this money and and space and time, like, I want to see some new things. I think there are a lot of other IPs to be adapted. There are a lot of books to be adapted. I'm sure you have your top five or what you'd like to see come out. And that's that's something that we can get into another dragon fire. But at the end of the day, I'm I'm bored. I am bored of the same old IP coming out again and again. What's this next one going to do? It's going to tease out a character for the whole series. And at the end of the day, we're going to find out it was Sam's father, like, I don't care.

Nathan

I'm getting my Tom Bombadil anime series.

James

Okay. I don't even know who that is. Because I've only seen the Lord of the Rings movies. And you can stone me to death for that later. But I have yet to read the Lord of the Rings books.

Nathan

I don't really like the book. So I think the movies are infinitely better.

James

But yeah, so I would say to wrap up my perspective, I'm hoping that some one of these is good, but I don't need it to be.

AI Voice

Number two.

James

All right, another five minutes on the clock. We have AI in writing, we have the advancement of this new technology that is coming through where you have AI tools that are learning how to write stories. And there have already been a few stories that have been published. I think mostly they've been like small children's board books. I don't think there have been any full novels published, but it's coming. So what are your thoughts on it?

Nathan

We've already seen this become an issue in the short story space where a lot of fantasy and science fiction, short fiction magazines have had a problem with AI generated stories being submitted where I think Clarkesworld and Grimdark Magazine both had to close their submissions, because they just did not have the staff to go through and actually determine whether these things were AI generated or not. So it is going to become a big issue. And I think as it becomes better and better, it's going to be the issue of can we determine whether something was written by an AI or human? And I think a good question is at that point where we can't determine whether it was or not, do we even care that at that point?

James

Here's my thoughts on it. I think that people will tell you that AI can't write a story like human can, it's going to be able to, you're going to see ai ai capable of writing a fully fleshed out book with fully fleshed out characters. And they might even be good books, potentially great books. Are they going to be able to push barriers and do something new with with plot devices or turn tropes on their head in the same way that people can? Maybe maybe not because they're really going to be based off of the literature we already have. So they're going to be able to turn out books 1000 times faster than the average writer and about two times faster than Brandon Sanderson, so they're gonna have more content coming through for less cost, they're gonna have to edit it. But they already pay editors, so why not? And so it takes off, it takes out the middleman, we don't need a writer anymore. And publishers are going to flock to that because

publishers are business and they want to sell their copies. I think the question isn't, can they do it? And should they do it because honestly, in AI could do a lot of people's jobs. And it could take away some of the burden on our labor forces, it could, it could be used in ways that are really productive and helpful for people. I don't know if taking away creative pursuits, and jobs that are focused on human creativity and using and music, arts, the books, movies, I don't know that we want to live in the world where we're not a creative species. And that is what we're going to teach ourselves to do. We've already cut all the art classes from schools. So are we going to cut English next? So we don't need to know how to write well? Like, where's this going? And what kind of society do we want to live in? I think is the question.

Nathan

Yeah. And I think in this in this utopia that I imagined for myself in the future, which is where I don't have to work, because I hate working, and AI does all the jobs that we all just like skip and like, do whatever we want. Like, we're all like Charles Darwin, and like the rich people of the Victorian era, I thought that the whole point of that is, so we get to be creative. And so we get to, like, engage in those activities that we don't have time to, or we don't have enough time to do because we're working 40 plus hours a week in jobs that we don't like. But like if all of a sudden we're taking those creative pursuits and giving those to AI as well, then like, what are we even doing here is like, what are our lives? What makes our lives meaningful?

James

And I think that's a great point. I think that this is not where we need AI. I think there are uses for AI. And I think, regardless of what we have to say here, publishing houses are going to try it. They've already done AI generated art for pretty big name books, I don't think anything's holding them back from replacing our author, or even trying to to skate a book by us without telling us it's AI generated content.

Nathan

The the issue too is that like I, as a reader want to read a book because an author wanted to write the book as a creative pursuit and not, and not because they want to get paid for it.

James

As soon as the timer goes off, we have to switch to the next topic. Nathan, what is the next topic?

AI Voice

Number Three.

Nathan

We thought it'd be fun if we each signed the other person, a terrible video game adaptation, whether that's a movie or a TV show or whatever. And the other person has to defend it and say why they actually think it's worthwhile no matter what their actual personal opinions on that adaptation are. I chose a movie that I know you've seen that I have not seen, and I want you to try to convince me to see it. And let's go Warcraft.

James

Oh, okay. I actually, I honestly don't think Warcraft was as bad of a movie as people make it out to be. I think it's not a good Warcraft movie. But it's, it's, I don't think it's meant to be faithful to the game. It's it's a very basic by the numbers fantasy movie. That is really good for background noise. It's you know, if if you want something to turn your brain off and watch put in Warcraft, I mean, it's not going to be an Oscar worthy performance. It's not going to make you tear up, but it's going to be entertaining. The graphics were not that bad. The acting, it was passable. And the storyline basic as it was, it was well done. I would say that Warcraft if it didn't have the name Warcraft would have been a really great streaming movie. That's all I got. All right. Don't even have to jump too far for that. I I actually believe that.

Nathan

Oh, yeah, I'll definitely check it out.

James You don't have to run to check it out. But I'm gonna give you the old Super Mario Brothers.

44:21

Yeah. Which I mean, I am excited for that new movie, except for the Chris Pratt. But that one does look really good. The one that's coming out soon. So the OG Super Mario Brothers. The thing for me is that that is the pinnacle of like movie camp. And I think that if a movie is going to be bad at least let it be campy. I don't know how people perceived it in the 1980s when it came

out, but by the time I saw it, I thought it was like a satire of itself. And I thought it didn't take itself too seriously. And it's just a good time. It is a funny movie, whether they wanted it to be or not. And it just has that very clear 80s aesthetic, it's something that could not be replicated today.

James

I'm just wondering if 80s aesthetic is good for a 90s movie?

Nathan

Oh, is it a 90s movie? So that makes it even worse, that makes even worse, but it maybe even makes it better that it has that aesthetic, because it's like so low budget, and it just doesn't care what you think about it. And I think I appreciate that. I think that when somebody shoots for a movie to be good, and then it's not good, that's the worst. But when people who make movies just say, I don't care what you think about this, we're just running with it. I think that there's something admirable about that.

Okay. With that, I think we're on to our next. Our next topic, you want to start us off.

AI Voice

Number Four.

Nathan

So for our next topic, and this goes back to James, what you were talking about at the beginning of the podcast, which is has Patrick Rothfuss ruined his legacy, because he hasn't finished his trilogy. So what do you think, as a big Name of the Wind fan?

James

I love the Name of the Wind. But I will say that if he hasn't ruined his legacy, he's definitely damaged it, he has done great harm to his legacy. If you're not familiar with Name of the Wind, Patrick Rothfuss, author of the Kingkiller Chronicles, the first book came out, but in the early 2000s. And then it took quite a few years for the second book to come out. And since then it's

been over a decade. And this promise book does not have a release date. So the Doors of Stone has been kind of MIA for a long time. I love the story. I can't wait to read it when it comes out. But he has been misleading, bordering on lies with some of the content with some of his Twitch streams and Q and A's and things like that. He recently went on a Twitch stream, he raised money. And the goal that they surpassed was that he would release a chapter of the book that had no spoilers in it. And then he said he was going to have a cast audio narrate that chapter. It has been over a year, and he has not released it. He has not given any plans to release it. He has not even addressed it. For the most part, he just kind of has avoided the topic of conversation. So people paid money, gave it to charity on on his behalf. And then he did not follow through with that promise. And I think that more than anything ruins his legacy. Because, you know, there's a certain promise you make to your readers when you're starting a series that it's going to finish. But even more than that he made a direct promise to those people who donated to charity on his behalf.

Nathan

And he completely avoided following through on it, and has since just stopped talking about it think that what that's what makes him different, for example, than George RR Martin, because George RR Martin has never said that he has written all seven books of A Song of Ice and Fire, like Patrick Rothfuss has said that all three of his books were written before they even published Name of the Wind. And while George RR Martin is also stringing people along, I don't think he's ever given any indication that there's like a publication date or that he was going to release something when he didn't. And so I think that's why there's a little bit of those differences there where Patrick Rothfuss seems to be a little more belligerent about the way that he's been treating the fans and just producing the work by George RR Martin seems like he's just kind of leaning back and just laughing at him about it all. But George RR Martin is also rolling in the money of HBO. Yeah. So they think there's a big difference there as well. I don't necessarily think always that authors owe readers anything. I will always love when they finish their series. But I also understand that there are things outside of their control that sometimes gets in the way, for example, like Scott Lynch, the reason he hasn't finished the Gentleman Bastard series is because of his own personal health concerns and his own health needs. Yeah, I think it's just the way that Patrick Rothfuss has navigated these spaces. And the rhetoric that he's been using that's made it just a little irksome.

James

I would also say this, in his defense, he did say that he had written all three books before publishing. But he also is clarified that book one had a huge amount of editing and changes made before it was actually released. And then subsequently, Book Two had to have so many changes. I can't think of how many changes that I've made from the original drafts have No Heart for a Theif, to what was actually released. And if I had written everything out and then

gone back and made changes to one at a time, that will be very difficult to do. I think I could do it in 10 years. But I would say like, it's not that like he just has decided not to release something that's done. I would also say there are some people who have been harassed, seeing him in ways that are very inappropriate. So I would say that's not acceptable. But at the same time, I think he was poised to be one of this generation's most notable sci fi fantasy authors, and he's ruined to that.

Nathan

Yeah, well, it seems like we can all just read the first binding and read that trilogy that will probably be completed, it'll give us the same experience that sometimes almost beat for beat. And I hate to say that because I really was rooting for this book. And we'll talk about that another time. Alrighty, well, I think that is it for this episode of the fantasy review podcast.

James

So thank you, everyone, for joining us for our first full episode here. We hope you enjoyed this episode was produced and edited by Tommy Rosae. Please also subscribe to our podcast. Wherever you get your podcasts, new episodes are gonna be posted every other week. So come back and join James and I as we tackle another in depth topic and another round of dragon fire. If you're interested in more reviews, interviews, recommendation lists, check out the [fantasy reviews.com](https://fantasyreviews.com) That is plural with an s [fantasy reviews.com](https://fantasyreviews.com). You can also follow James and I on Twitter, Tiktok and Instagram all of the information for our socials will be the Episode Notes for this episode. Also consider supporting the fantasy review on Patreon to help us keep doing what we're doing and helps our entire team to support our blog and this new podcast. And you can also find information about how to do that in the Episode Notes. So James, I think that's it. That's it. Thank you for joining us.

Nathan

All right. Goodbye, everyone.