

Intro

MC: I'm Monique Collins.

JT: I'm Jill Tew.

CI: My name is Camille Iker.

CG: I'm Chelsea Gayden.

KL: I'm KL Burd.

MC: And welcome to the Afronauts podcast. A mood for the culture and the future. We supply speculative writing encouragement, resources, and entertainment.

Writing While Black

JT: Hey y'all! Welcome back to the Afronauts podcast. I'm Jill Tew. In Writing While Black this week, we talk about "issue books". What do agents mean when they say they don't want these, and is it an impossible ask for marginalized authors? Check it out.

KB

Yeah, okay, so I've calmed down since we started talking about this topic, but I'll probably get hype again real quick. Oh my god. So I talked to my wife about it. I was like, man, so we're talking about these issue books. I was like, "What do you think you means?" She's like, "Exactly what you think it means. Like, it's... y'all are questioning what it means. But I know exactly what an issue book is, they don't want anything to do with race." Like they want you to just exist, like, as a black person and like a regular story and not bring up any type of things relating to your race.

CI

They want you to be white.

JT

Right.

CI

With Black skin

KB

Yes.

CI

Move through the world, like, unimpeded by race, and therefore not Black.

CG

Okay, so I have a question. So what about like a fantasy world where everyone's Black? Is that like, I mean, they won't have that, -- they're still gonna be like class systems and like...

JT

Yeah, even in like *A Song of Wraiths and Ruin*, by Roseanne Brown. It's an all Black fantasy world, but there's different divisions, there's, there's immigrants, right, and refugees that are seen as a lower status. There's a lot of political stuff that happens there. It's not necessarily race-based. There are different-- I can't remember if there's colorism in that book. I don't think so. But it's mostly about, like the different classes.

KB

There's classism. Okay, so in that book I wanted..

JT

But is that an issue book? Is that your question?

CG

Yeah, that's why I'm wondering. Because how do you get rid of issues?

KB

All these episodes are gonna tie together, y'all. Because last time when we talked about Blackness, and what that encompasses, and all those things that we talked about, are not present in this fantasy world. So the things that we as Black Americans think, I guess, make us Black, which gets right back into the same conversation. It's not there. So is it simply that it's a Black story, remember, written by Black people

with Black characters that makes it Black, right? That's what we said. So then it's a Black story, but then there's no issues because it's set in a fantasy world?

CI

Well, there's no race race based issues.

KB

Yes, there's no issues based on white supremacy. Wait, that's what it is, they want to avoid white supremacy.

CI

Which, Chelsea can be done, in the absence of whiteness in a fantastical world where it's all Black people. You can't divorce any ethnicity from white supremacy. So I would say if it's not set in the real world, then it could not be a racial issue book. If it's set in the real world, they're saying they want a non-issue book as in something where the main characters aren't impeded by white supremacy.

JT

Some of it, too, is like a way to talk about it without talking about it, right. Like, I don't know if y'all read *Raybearer* by Jordan Ifueko, but the world is like super racially heterogeneous. So there's a lot of diversity, a lot of different regions that are kind of like coded to different, like real places, and continents and countries. But the like, one of the main cruxes of the book is this cultural homogenization that like the government wants to do. But the government is full of people of all different ethnicities and races in this world. So it's still I mean, it still reminds you, I think of like, what happens here when people try to like whitewash different cultures and people. But it's not a one to one mapping, because it's not like a bunch of white people in government trying to homogenize everybody else. I think it might be a way for readers that are white, or that are part of those societies here, like in the real world to be like, "Oh, if I want, I could like turn a blind eye to this because it doesn't, it doesn't make me uncomfortable, if I don't want it to, because it's easy for me to say like, it's not exactly the same." But if you're reading that, as a person that is often made to like deny parts of your culture, you see the signs immediately, like you understand what she's trying to do. But if you are part of the class that tends to do that, that whitewashing and that homogenizing, it's easy for you to read past it or not feel like it applies to you.

CG

So do you think like, the whole the goal with you know, avoiding issue books is to avoid like, I guess that feeling like the acknowledgement of white supremacy?

KB

I won't mention the agent's name, but there's an agent that said that they did research and teens want contemporary YA with friendship stories and diverse protagonists, but de-emphasizing issue books. And I'm like, Okay, I'm wondering which teens?

CG

Yeah.

KB

Like, just seems like they want like performative writing, where people are just sitting there like, Oh, look, our books are diverse, but--

CG

Okay, I have a question for you guys. I have a question. So sometimes, I have to, like take a break from reading books that are very painful. You know what I mean? Like, oh, yeah, like or even just media in general that's painful. And so my question is, is is that what they mean? Like, is that are there any audiences who they're looking for like, like maybe Black, a Black joy book because--

KB

So they're looking for Black joy but they're not saying Black joy.

CG

Well, yeah, that's the thing if they're saying we want books with Black joy, does that mean it can't--are the two like mutually exclusive, like Black joy and issue book? Can you not have Black joy and the issue book?

KB

You really can. I know you can. Yeah.

CI

And I think there's a difference between an agent saying, I want a, I want a book that in some way highlights Black joy, or shows a Black protagonist, overcoming odds or whatever, versus I don't want there to be any problems, any racial problems in this book, I think those are two different things. Because you can have books, movies, where the characters do experience racial trauma, just because you live in the real world. And we all experience racial trauma every almost every day, at least. And I think it's disingenuous to say "I want diverse books. But I want diverse books that don't talk about the things that are actually happening with real people."

KB

I think the problem is that we need some examples of this. Because as I'm thinking about books by Black authors, say contemporary novels, because some of these tweets that we saw, most of them are contemporary, they're not even talking about fantasy. Talking about contemporary YA--

CG

That's what doesn't make sense to me. You want the real world if you want contemporary, you have to take the real world, right?

KB

Yes. And this one says, "I love diverse representation that's not presented as issue books, just queer POC and differently-abled people doing stuff." And I'm like, doing like--

MC

Who's asking for this? Are these white agents or Black agents?

KB

Ah, see, none of these agents we've talked about. So far have been Black, and I was gonna bring that up eventually.

JT

I haven't seen this from agents necessarily. Well, let's talk about how there are very few Black agents. That's, that's part of the problem. But you do see this from from Black readers and people that are on, like, BookTube and stuff that sometimes as a Black reader, and me too, like I just want to read about Black superheroes, right? And like, there are going to be issues in there, right? Because that's part of the Black experience. But even if there weren't, I would still love to read about a Black superhero. like doing the same kind of stuff that Superman does. Sometimes you just want like Black princesses.

CI

What would the Black princess of Alabama be like? If I'm a Black princess in Alabama, I can be a princess, I can be the goddess of Alabama. And I am living my best life in my mansion. But I'm in Alabama.

JT

Sure.

CI

I could have all the money, have all the friends have already things, but I'm still Black in Alabama.

JT

Yeah, I think to the like contemporary versus, like secondary world stuff, right? Like if I think about like the main characters in some secondary world fantasies I've read, where it's all Black characters, the society is different. And so you don't have the same like social or political realities that you have in the real world. And in some cases, the Black princesses are the ones on the top of society, right? Because they're princesses. Right. And in those cases, I don't see the callbacks to the social realities here. But I still see her talking about how her skin is brown. And like, sometimes that's enough for me. It's like she gets to wear nice dresses and looks like me.

MC

I think part of the issue is that white issues have been normalized, in our society. So white people are allowed to have all of their issues, and all of their stories and books. But then when when when it becomes Black issues it's suddenly either un-American or not real enough for a white audience.

CG

Unrelatable.

MC

And that's where part of the issue comes from. What did you say Chelsea?

CG

I said unrelatable.

MC

Oh there you go, Chelsea.

CI

My favorite one is they can't connect with my characters.

MC

Because you can have a book full of joy, like, for example, like a book with sisters, right. And they're living their best life as sisters. But you're still gonna have those realistic issues that come along with being Black. And I think, for example, if you have a book about woman, white woman, you're going to have women's issues in that book, because it's just a natural part of being a woman. But you never hear anyone say, "Yeah, I don't want I don't want those women issues' books."

CG

Yeah, like, I want a book about women. But there can't be any women's issues. Like what world is this?

KB

You're right about it being normalized. Because if you read a book about white women, and they're just doing whatever they do in their world and encounter anything that happens in their world, it's normalized, we see it on TV, wherever you hear about it. We don't think it's strange, even if we cannot relate to it at all. Like I mean, it doesn't matter if it's someone very rich or someone poor, but if they're in an all white environment, we just still accept it. You know, you could be on the Upper East Side of Manhattan and living your highlife and none of us will know that life but no one's gonna be like, "Oh, they're talking about rich white people. We can't do this. We have to make it relatable to everyone."

CG

But in a book like that rich white people, won't they have rich white people issues?

KB

Yes! They will.

CI

Yeah. And they do have issues. it's specific to them.

CG

But if an agent were to request no rich white people issues, but tell me give me a book about rich white people. I'd be like, so what happens in the book?

JT

We talk about specific? Do we think that some of the recent specific releases by Black authors would be classified as issue books? Like do we think like *Wings of Ebony* or *Legendborn* or *Raybearer* or *A Song Below Water*? Do you think that these agents would classify those as issue books?

KB

That's a great question. Because of the ones I've read, they all deal with race in their context. You think about *Wings of Ebony*. It's set in Houston, like in the Third Ward, where there's like Black folks everywhere. Like, yeah, you can't get away from that part of it. You know, *A Song Below Water* talks equates Blackness to you, know.

JT

Yeah, to being to being a siren.

KB

Yeah, yeah.

JT

So but would you but I think some of the tweets and manuscript wishlists we were looking at when you're talking about issue books, also talk about like, "I don't, quote unquote, just want it to be about that. I also want like, rich character development." And those books absolutely have that. Right? So I've just I still, I wonder...

CG

Are those books on the list of examples of like, what they say they want? When they say they want a book, that's not an issue book?

MC

What is on the list? Because I see that I see like, "Oh, I don't want an issue book." But then I see "Oh, but give me The Hate you Give." I'm like what?

KB

No, you can't use The Hate You Give. That's an issue book.

CI

I also like, I don't like the phrase, "I want there to be rich character development. In spite of the white supremacy." That's like saying that my my character hasn't been deeply impacted by white supremacy. And that's so untrue. And I feel like it's just such a normal Black thing, to, from a very young age be completely changed by white supremacy, have that completely color your outlook on the world. I feel like just a deep dive into that could be so nuanced, and so multifaceted, and could be the rich character development in any story. So I don't like the separation between rich character development and how white supremacy impacts us.

KB

Okay, so one thing that we have to recognize is that white supremacy is a system, and it's also a culture that people don't realize exist around them. So they fall into this. And they hear other agents say the same thing. And they use that same wording, because it's part of the system and the culture. So we see that the tweets that we found were older. And one thing that white supremacy does real well is it's able to hide things that it wants to at certain times. So right now, you're not going to hear someone talking about issue books, they're going to change the language and make sure that it's very specific, but not

using that terminology. And even the tweets, we found that all say POC that would say BIPOC. You know, like, instead of saying issue driven books, now, they would be using Black joy, as the alternate and say, we only want Black joy, or we don't want any trauma based stories. Yeah.

CG

Coded language.

KB

It's so coded.

CI

Question, What do y'all think about Black Panther, In terms of the conversation of trauma, Black trauma versus Black joy? Because it has both of them. So would that be an issue movie? It's very some Black trauma there.

CG

Yeah, I think I did see someone say they wanted Black Panther like don't want issue books, but Black panther was an example of what they wanted.

KB

But it wasn't a good example. It. I mean, it's funny, my wife and I talked about Black Panther specifically, because we're talking about how people probably want the Wakanda side, but they don't want the Killmonger side. You know.

CG

It's like, you can't get one without the other.

KB

No, you can't.

MC

The interesting thing that we haven't mentioned yet about Wakanda is that within Wakanda there wasn't just joy, like they had-- they also had issues in Wakanda. It starts off with the kidnapping of either like young girls, young boys, I can't remember. But um, so I don't know, I think that's the other thing, like, as long as the issues aren't about white people, that's okay. But it's like we have like issues that relate to or that involve Black cultures or Black to Black culture, then they're kind of okay with that.

CG

So are you saying that the it with the issue books white people can't be the issue.

MC

Exactly.

KB

Oh, okay. I'm thinking about this, as you're saying that because in Black Panther, like there's two white people like in the whole movie like there's like not about white folks at all. Yeah. And it's not focused on them.

CG

Yeah, it's not white people being the issue as like the main--

MC

That's what they mean. They don't want any white issues.

KB

You just put a spin on the whole entire thing. I gotta go back through the whole thing.

CG

I do feel like I have an understanding now, though, because I was thinking our issues, but it's actually their issues that they don't want to see.

MC

Yes.

CI

It was never about us. It was always about them.

MC

Mmmhmm. Look at that.

KB

Ok so go to The Hate You Give for example, you're talking about white police officer shooting Black kids and the subsequent story from all that and you're right, because you're talking about an issue that's outside of the Black community affecting the Black community. And Black Panther, It's all like, you know, the Jabari tribe, that's Black people with Black people fighting for, you know, the crown. And even Killmonger being Black coming over still a Black person fighting a Black person like... Oh, you might be right.

CG

It's almost like you're making it sound like to remove white or the issues from the book. It's almost like you have to remove white supremacy completely. or white people, right?

MC

Well, yeah.

KB

But you can you can have white people who aren't participating in the system, and they're still allowed to be a part of it. Now if they're the ones that are perpetuating the, the hate or the trauma. That might be where people get upset.

MC

I think that's true.

CI

Like Martin Freeman, in Black Panther.

KB

Mm hmm.

CI

He was one of the two white guys in the movie, but he wasn't a part of the problem.

JT

Innocuous, yeah. So the key to Black joy is just to not have a story with any white people in it. The issue books thing makes me think I mean, obviously like *The Hate You Give* has been on the list for years. And I also think about the like Highlander phenomenon, in with books from BIPOC authors. It's like there can only be one. Right?

KB

Only our audience is gonna get that reference. I love it, though. I just love that.

JT

It's conflated right. Is it like no issue books, or is it actually no more issue books because we already have the definitive YA contemporary issue book?

So people always like Oh, don't reference *The Hate You Give* cuz, I have a YA contemporary. And, you know, some people are like, Hey, don't do that. Then I got to my agent. And she was like, No, like, comp that cuz everybody knows it. And it was so funny because other folks were like, Don't do that. Don't do it. Don't do it. It's too big. And my agents are like no no, we're gonna put that in there.

CI

But there's a reason why it's so big. Like they decided like, it's not like, people act like the market is like this thing. That's like, completely unknowable. These are just completely, it's like, No, you make the market. You decide what it's gonna get, right. That's the one that was picked.

MC

It's not like, the market isn't like, a sentient creature that's like just creating itself and like eating and existing and breathing all by it self.

CG

It's like a machine. That's been fine tuned.

CI

And you put data in it, and it puts out what you want it to put out.

KB

I think you're right, Jill, like there's a limited amount, like you're telling me no one else has written a book even close to that last five years? Yeah, it is.

JT

They just need one that like high school teachers can put on their curriculum, and then call it a day.

MC

I think that's what they do to Black people. I think that's like, that's what they've been doing to Black people, since the time of colonization and slavery. It's like, let's pit them against each other. And we're only going to pick the one and the token one or the best one. And that's a strategy. That's a strategy that's been used by racists since the dawn of racism. And I think it because if you look at it like you can have, have y'all noticed you can have like 2,029 million books about a white person who's like, living in the country and falling in love, but you're only going to see like, one or two, on the flip side about Black people.

KB

I think I want to define even more, what do we consider issue books? Are we saying Black trauma is issue books? Or is there other things that fall into issue books? White guilt, Black trauma, anything else?

CG

I think that's, that's what I see.

MC

Yeah, it has to be white guilt with Black trauma.

KB

So white guilt plus Black trauma equals issue book.

Craft Country

What up afronauts! Welcome to another edition of Craft Country. I'm your host KL Burd and today we are going to be talking about one my favorite resources that many people haven't heard of and that's the snowflake method.

Now, I've mentioned this on here before but today I'm going to give you a breakdown. This craft resource actually comes courtesy of my wife. It was Christmas 2015 and she got tired of me talking about writing a book for the first 12 years we had been together. So she searched a few places and bought me the book, "How to write a novel using the snowflake method by Randy Ingermanson" Randy is a physicist turned author and like many of us who are scientists and writers we love finding the formula within writing.

I love his approach to a novel and as I was going over it for this segment, I realized that I need to apply it to my current Work in progress. This is also a valuable resource for any plotters because it does detailed character work and behind the scene descriptions. For someone like me who's a plantser, we grab as much good as we can from it and make it work and for my pantsers out there, just soak up the info, put it in the back of your mind and let your free flowing brain do its thing like it always does.

So without further ado I'm going to jump into Randy's 10 steps for writing a Novel

Take an hour and write a one-sentence summary of your novel. Make it 25 words or less and focus on your protagonists and their goal. Hopefully this helps you when you get that dreaded writer question, "What is your book about?" ughh. I hate it and love it at the same time.

Take another hour and expand that sentence to a full paragraph describing the story setup, major disasters, and ending of the novel using 5 sentences. Sentence 1 is your setting/backdrop and when you introduce your main character or characters. Randy likes to structure his book in three disasters plus an ending. Each one of these makes up the next four sentences. Each disaster corresponds to a different

part of the story. Disaster 1 goes with Act 1, Disaster 2 at the midpoint of Act 2, Disaster 3 at the end of Act 2 and the ending in the 3rd Act.

Step 3 is to make a summary sheet for each major character. This will have a short sentence about your character's background and then one each for their motivation, goals, and conflict. Add in their internal character arc or epiphany they will have once they learn what they are supposed to in the end and finish with a one paragraph summary of the character.

Step 4 is to expand your one paragraph summary into a one page synopsis by simply expanding each sentence into a paragraph of it's own.

Step 5 is to Write a character synopsis for each Character. Once again, give yourself an hour for each one. It might take a day or two but it's all good because you'll have a fully formed picture of your characters in your mind. Write up a one-page description of each major character and a half-page description of the other important characters.

For Step 6 you're gonna write a longer 4 page synopsis. This isn't for anyone but you. Just take each paragraph from your one pagers and expand them out, adding more details as you go.

Step 7 is a lot of fun for plotters. You get to create a character Bible for each major character. Create the standard stuff such as birthdate, description, history, motivation, goal, etc. Most importantly, how will this character change by the end of the novel? Guess what, this might change what you wrote in the 4 page synopsis and that's ok, go back and edit as you continue. If it helps, grab some pictures that you think might fit them and create an aesthetic board for your characters.

Step 8 is to list every scene in your novel. Make sure you have conflict in each one. Add a column to describe what happens or Point of View if needed.

Step 9 is to look at those scenes and make sure they are either proactive meaning they have a Goal, conflict and possible set back or Reactive with a reaction dilemma and decision.

Write the Novel! You've got all kinda of backstory, resources, character bibles, etc at your finger tips. IF you're like me, then all the hard work is done and the fun can begin.

You can find many of Randy's Resources at advancedfictionwriting.com and I would also recommend getting his book if possible.

Alright Afnonauts, until next time! Happy Writing.

<https://www.advancedfictionwriting.com/articles/snowflake-method/>

Craft Book: How to Write a Novel Using the Snowflake Method: Randy Ingermanson

Genre Galaxies

Hey, I'm Camille Iker and you're listening to Genre Galaxies. Today, I'm doing a brief talk about science fiction subgenres.

Alright, so when I was growing up, science fiction to me meant movies like Independence Day, Jurassic Park, and even Honey, I Shrunk the Kids. But I gotta be honest, I thrived in 90s tv programs. There are way too many to name, but my absolute favorites were and will forever be tied between The X-Files and Roswell. Also, they were both remade recently, which is fun.

So there's a quick background into some of my favorite sci-fi programs and movies. They range from dinosaurs to aliens, to other kinds of aliens. But part of the reason I wanted to talk about sci-fi is that I wanted to highlight other parts of the genre. Today I picked two subgenres: utopian and science fantasy.

I'll start with utopian sci-fi. This is when a story is set in a society that could be called 'perfect'. Sometimes it's perfect because no one has to do manual labor. After all, the robots do everything for them. Sometimes it's perfect because everyone is identical. There's no need to physically compare yourself to anyone else if there aren't any differences, right?

These utopian sci-fi's are often used as a lesson or satire because the conflict is usually someone in this society realizing it isn't good that we rely on robots, or if everyone looks and dresses the same it doesn't leave much (if any) room for creativity and individuality.

The first book that comes to mind here is THE GIVER.

The next sci-fi subgenre is science fantasy. Blending science fiction and fantasy, broadly, makes sense to me. When I first thought about it, I thought *"Wow, I haven't seen or read many science fantasy projects."* But that's a lie.

HIS DARK MATERIALS combines the two, as does THE DARK TOWER by Stephen King. Doctor Who even dives into fantasy sometimes with vampires and witches. So, science fantasy has been all around me and I just never thought about it. I think that's because, for the longest time, I thought of genres as either X or Y, never considering they could be on a spectrum of like

25% fantasy, 30% horror, 45% sci-fi, you know? Not that you can or should use percentages, but the scale itself is there whether we acknowledge it or not.

Alright, I'm Camille Iker. Thanks for joining me inside Genre Galaxies.

Black Spec Fic Recs

Hey Afronauts! I'm Chelsea Gayden and welcome back for more Black Spec Fic Recs. My recommendations today are magical stories that tackle real world issues.

Now, I'm not much of a historical fantasy reader, but Morowa Yejidé's sophomore novel *Creatures of Passage* piqued my interest. It's teeming with magical realism and lush, literary prose, with characters that are equally intriguing.

The story follows Nephthys Kinwell, an older Gullah woman who carries lost souls across the Anacostia river in Washington, DC. Her character is named after the Egyptian goddess responsible for protecting the dead who is often depicted as a mourning woman. And that's exactly who Nephthys is.

Mourning the loss of her twin brother Osiris, readers are given an intimate look into this woman's all-consuming pain. But when Nephthys discovers her 10-year-old great-nephew has been spending time with a mysterious figure by the river, Nephthys must face her family and herself.

Nephthys and her family have a connection to death that is in part a source of personal power, yet equally a source of anguish. The narrative moves us through one person's experience to the next, uncovering the mystery of Osiris's death, and how it has affected those around him.

Creatures of Passage is as deep and dark as it is brilliant. Yejidé's writing is haunting and the story is rich with culture, folklore, and the supernatural. And although this novel was hard to read at times, I appreciate the hard truths about family, community, and trauma it lays bare to readers.

My next recommendation is the contemporary YA fantasy *A Song Below Water* by Bethany C. Morrow. The story is told from 2 points of view, sister-friends Tavia and Effie who live in an alternate version of Portland, Oregon where mystical creatures exist. Although each person with magical powers is described in beautiful detail with amazing abilities, they are not all treated as such.

In this world, one type of magical creature is feared and threatened above all others: sirens. And in this world, all sirens are Black women. One of our protagonists, Tavia, is a siren living in secret. And when the murder of a suspected siren gets everyone talking, Tavia finds it harder than ever to hid her siren voice. Meanwhile, Effie, who is not a siren, is facing her own challenges as she notices things about herself changing. Yet her support of her sis is unwavering. And their relationship is one of my favorite parts of the story.

But there is one aspect of this novel that I appreciate above all others, and that is the truth it tells about the way black women are viewed and treated in America. Too often we are disregarded, disrespected, and distrusted due to our race and gender. When reading this story, you can't help but think of the challenges black women face, especially when we use our voices to challenge the unfair treatment we face. But *A Song Below Water* highlights just how difficult and dangerous it can be for black women to speak up in a world that seems determined to silence us.

This book screams, not just Black Lives Matter, but Black women's Lives matter too. And It's incredible to read a story that makes me feel seen, and reminds me of the power of my own voice. I'm looking forward to more black girl magic in Morrow's latest *A Song Below Water* novel, *A Chorus Rises*, out June 1st.

Well, that's all I have for now. As always, I'd love to hear your recommendations. Just use the hashtag #BlackSpecFicRecs, and I'll be sure to keep an eye out for yours.

Til next time.

Black Joy Crew

Camille Iker 0:00

Hey, Monique!

Monique Collins 0:01

Hey, Camille!

Both 0:02

Hey, Afronauts!

Monique Collins 0:04

And welcome to the Black Joy Crew segment.

Camille Iker 0:07

Today on the Black Joy Crew, we're gonna talk about how many stories we prefer to write at once. And using playlists to help us get the vibe of settings or characters.

Monique Collins 0:20

It's going to be fun. Let's get to it.

Camille, how many stories do you prefer to write at the same time?

Camille Iker 0:29

Okay, so I prefer to write two to three stories at once.

Monique Collins 0:35

Oh!

Camille Iker 0:36

Because I get frustrated sometimes. And I feel like I just want I want to write I want to be creative all the time. So I want backups. So if one isn't working for me, I want to be able to just pivot and switch to the next one.

Monique Collins 0:54

Okay, that makes sense.

Camille Iker 0:55

Yeah. What about you?

Monique Collins 0:57

In the past, I only wanted to focus on one thing, just because I think I have a hard time focusing naturally. So, I was like, I need one thing to focus on. But now that I'm a little older, I have decided to actually start this new thing, where I'm writing one story, one short story a week, and I said my range would be from, at the minimum, I want 3000 words. And then the max like around 7000 words would be a good max. And why?

Camille Iker 1:33

Every week?

Monique Collins 1:34

Yes.

Camille Iker 1:34

You write a short story every week?

Monique Collins 1:36

I've just started this. So I made the goal for myself yesterday, not yesterday, the day before yesterday.

Camille Iker 1:42

Oh, this is brand brand new.

Monique Collins 1:43

Yes, it's brand spankin' new. I said I'm gonna I'm going to try to accomplish this goal. And the reason why because I felt really, have you ever felt like you were in a creative desert?

Camille Iker 1:57

Yeah. Yeah.

Monique Collins 1:58

Like everything was kind of just like, you know, dry around you, artistic wise, and you just needed something to revive that creative spirit inside of you? So that's why I chose to do it. And also, I found that I was a little too critical when it-- because I'm writing a book, as well. But my super editor is always in my

head when I'm writing my book. And so I said, If I push myself to write a short story a week, I'm writing these stories for myself. So it'll just be something that I can do and finish and have work to push out to the world. So hopefully.

Camille Iker 2:36

That is so smart.

Monique Collins 2:37

Yeah.

Camille Iker 2:37

That's so smart. Because it's, like near instant gratification.

Monique Collins 2:42

Yes.

Camille Iker 2:43

You know? So that's, that's so smart. That's a great. You know what, it's also so funny, because recently, I started writing short stories, and sending them to like magazines.

Monique Collins 2:56

Yes!

Camille Iker 2:57

Really recently, like over the past, like two months, I've been doing it.

Monique Collins 3:01

Oh! Okay.

Camille Iker 3:02

And I also love writing short stories, and it is like, near instant gratification. Like, I can start one day and finish that day, or finish in a few days. And I don't have to worry about this, like 90,000 word novel,

Monique Collins 3:18

Exactly!

Camille Iker 3:19

It's like, bite sized pieces, stories. Great idea.

Monique Collins 3:24

Because I know some people, they draft really quickly, and they can write a novel, like, in a month or two months. I'm not that kind of person. For a lot of reasons, mostly because I work full time as a teacher, but--

Camille Iker 3:38

Also because you're writing 7000 word short stories every week!

Monique Collins 3:42

Hahaha! Now!

Camille Iker 3:43

Just saying, that might, you know your priorities will be will be you know, shifted a bit.

Monique Collins 3:51

It's funny, though, because, you know, like, we talked about this before, where you're someone who, you thrive off of not having much to do, right? Like you get more energy from less from doing less. And I get more energy from doing more.

Camille Iker 4:07

Yeah.

Monique Collins 4:08

Which sounds--

Camille Iker 4:08

We're such opposites.

Monique Collins 4:09

Yeah, so I think that'll hype me up a little bit.

Camille Iker 4:15

I mean, you know what, that's true. Also, because you are the kind of person that needs like stuff to do all the time. So if you're writing a short story every week, and also working, and also writing the novel, that'll keep you busy. And maybe then that'll encourage you to be really productive.

Monique Collins 4:34

Especially when you like, see all these these submissions or these things. You're like, oh, man, I wish I had to work out to submit, you know, to that thing.

Camille Iker 4:44

Oh! Yes!

Monique Collins 4:44

I really wish I had just written that thing that was on my mind. And then I could submit

Camille Iker 4:48

Absolutely!

Monique Collins 4:49

And so. I'm just--

Camille Iker 4:51

Or you're on Twitter and you see an agent say, Oh, I really like this thing.

Monique Collins 4:55

Yeah!

Camille Iker 4:55

And it's like, Oh! I have that thing!

Monique Collins 4:58

In my head!

Camille Iker 4:59

It's like 25% done!

Monique Collins 5:01

Right!

Camille Iker 5:01

Or, I got it in my head. I know the way it's supposed to go.

Monique Collins 5:04

Right!

Camille Iker 5:05

If I had just started this a year ago, it would be I could give it to you right now.

Monique Collins 5:09

Exactly. Exactly.

Camille Iker 5:11

I get that. Yeah.

Monique Collins 5:12

So I'm trying to kind of like budget my time. If that makes sense?

Camille Iker 5:17

You have to that's a-- You've got a busy schedule.

Monique Collins 5:20

Yeah.

Camille Iker 5:20

Do all of this.

Monique Collins 5:22

I know!

Camille Iker 5:25

You have like, a calendar, like a scheduler?

Monique Collins 5:28

No because I think that would freak me out. I would get so freaked out if I saw everything I was doing all at once.

Camille Iker 5:36

I just got a planner. I'm obsessed with it.

Monique Collins 5:39

Yeah, but you, you love structure.

Camille Iker 5:41

I, you know what, that's true.

Monique Collins 5:44

I just want to do it and then just be like, okay, it's done.

Camille Iker 5:49

Well, and you can check it off in your head.

Monique Collins 5:51

Yeah.

Camille Iker 5:53

As opposed to, I like checking it off, like physically on a piece of paper. So.

Monique Collins 5:56

Exactly.

Camille Iker 5:57

It's the same thing, just in different places. Okay, so I know we're opposites in a lot of ways. So I'm really interested to hear about the playlist you make for your character or your world. Tell me about it.

Monique Collins 6:09

When it comes to my characters, and playlists. I make a couple of playlist I make--

Camille Iker 6:15

For each character?

Monique Collins 6:16

For each main character.

Camille Iker 6:18

Okay, yeah.

Monique Collins 6:19

And this is probably the only time I do any sort of organizational type of thing. Just because it feels kind of scattered and in disarray.

Camille Iker 6:29

It is! It literally is because there's different songs different vibe.

Monique Collins 6:33

Yes!

Camille Iker 6:34

So yeah.

Monique Collins 6:35

So, what I do is create a song playlist for my like, heroes and my villains. And this can be in speculative writing, or this can be in like more non genre or literary writing. But I like to take, let's say, like sound playlists, movie playlists and show playlists. Because if I know what my characters like to listen to, and what they like to watch, then I'll know so much more about them. My characters are high schoolers in like, the late 90s. Like 99s, and then like, kind of like early 2000s. That time period.

Camille Iker 7:14

Very cool. Like, era.

Monique Collins 7:16

Yes!

Camille Iker 7:17

Just the vibe.

Monique Collins 7:19

But my main character, one of her favorite-- in my playlist, one of her favorite shows is A Different World.

Camille Iker 7:28

Oooh!

Monique Collins 7:29

Yes! Right.

Camille Iker 7:30

A Different World!

Monique Collins 7:31

I know!

Camille Iker 7:32

My heart! Oh, I can't! Okay, go on.

Monique Collins 7:36

Yeah, one of her favorite shows is A Different World. And her her and her best friend, they like love that show and they kind of watch it together. So it's kind of like a way to bind them in the in the book. And then another show is Moesha. I decided on my Moesha though, because I wanted, like shows with a lot of women who were doing a lot of brave and just positive things.

Camille Iker 8:02

So tell me to the top songs.

Monique Collins 8:05

Okay!

Camille Iker 8:06

Of the playlists that you manufactured.

Monique Collins 8:08

So, my main character, her name is Nakeisha. So, Nakeisha, her two favorite songs. One of them is Salt-n-Pepa. Shoop. The other song is by Brandy.

Camille Iker 8:22

Of course! Of course.

Monique Collins 8:24

And it is. I Want to Be Down.

Camille Iker 8:26

Oh, such a good song!

Monique Collins 8:29

Yeah, because she's all in her feelings about this boy. So I was I like I need songs that reflect that.

Camille Iker 8:31

That sounds like Brandy!

Monique Collins 8:31

Yeah. She's all in her feelings. And I just want her to be like, young and kind of cool and mellow. And so that's her vibe.

Camille Iker 8:44

I like the vibe. That seems very 90s.

Monique Collins 8:47

Yes.

Camille Iker 8:48

Salt-N-Pepa and Brandy. 90s. Classic 90s.

Monique Collins 8:53

So what about you? What are your top two songs for your characters? Or, or shows and movies and stuff if you have any.

Camille Iker 9:02

No shows or movies, but my, my story takes place in the secondary world. But it's a portal fantasy. So the characters came over from Atlanta. But anyway, uh, the first song I have is called I Gave You All by Mumford and Sons. And it's like this really visceral song about being betrayed.

Monique Collins 9:28

Oh, gosh!

Camille Iker 9:31

No, it's I picked this song because obviously it's it made sense for this because I pick songs to go with scenes, not characters. So--

Monique Collins 9:43

Okay, so this is more like a setting song?

Camille Iker 9:46

This is this is a setting song. And in the setting, the main character feels betrayed. And this song is like so emotional. It's so emo and just like, like you would think that this person had like, tried to kill her grandmother or something like--

Monique Collins 10:05

Oh my gosh!

Camille Iker 10:06

Like the song is so emotional, but it's so fitting for how she feels. And then the other song is My Soul I by Anna Leone, which is a love song, basically. And I picked that song because I felt like it went with the Mumford and Sons song, because she feels this way about the same person, the same person.

Monique Collins 10:31

Okay, so-

Camille Iker 10:31

The same person that she's betrayed by is the person that she is in love with and they have this really intense romantic relationship.

Monique Collins 10:39

Oooh, so this girl is dramatic!

Camille Iker 10:41

Oh, she is so dramatic. I love her so much. She's so emotional.

Monique Collins 10:48

Oh my gosh! I love characters like that!

Camille Iker 10:50

Yes, she's so emotional. So those are two songs I picked. And they both go with two different things, obviously. But like they're they really do just encompass her strong feelings of everything. She feels everything just like at a 10 just--

Monique Collins 11:08

Wow! I love characters who are like all in their feelings like all over their feelings.

Camille Iker 11:13

Yes. Like messy like she is so chaotic. I love I love her so much!

Monique Collins 11:22

But you know what I don't think I've ever written about a super messy all in their feelings. I don't think I've ever written about that character. I usually, but I think I should. But I usually write about the characters who are like, what is this girl doing? Type of characters. But those aren't necessarily as-- I don't want to say as fun. But I imagined the other way would be super fun to write. Because you can be just like, all in your feelings as well. And really dig into the character.

Camille Iker 11:54

I am! I am. Promise you that!

Monique Collins 11:54

So what kind of story is it?

Camille Iker 11:55

It is an epic fantasy, where the main character finds out that she is the descendant of a goddess.

Monique Collins 12:03

Okay! And then there's a portal world?

Camille Iker 12:06

Uhmh. Yeah.

Monique Collins 12:07

My story, it's, I don't know if I will call it an epic fantasy. I don't think I would. But there are there are these two different worlds in the story. And one is like, the 90s of this area that's really close to Charleston, South Carolina. And then the other side is like this imaginative realm. And so it's really cool to write about both of those places. But um, the main, one of the main characters, Nakeisha, she's involved in both places in the story for different reasons.

Camille Iker 12:43

Okay.

Monique Collins 12:43

But, nah. She's not, she's not really dramatic. Yeah.

Camille Iker 12:46

That's nice. I like writing characters who are like my, my main character is a lawyer.

Monique Collins 12:51

Oh!

Camille Iker 12:51

And she's, I purposefully made her an attorney because I wanted to show that attorneys can be so emotional, so chaotic, because they put all of their like stoicism into their profession. That's what's in

every part of their every other part of their life is just a mess. So I wanted to show that with my character at her office, with other people being one way and then also in the world where she is just wild.

Monique Collins 13:23

I think it's really cool to show characters in their different places and kind of how they like code switch between worlds. Especially Black characters, because unfortunately, we have to do it all the time.

Camille Iker 13:37

All the time.

Monique Collins 13:38

So I think that's really cool to see.

Camille Iker 13:40

So that's why I picked those two songs. One is about betrayal. The other one is about being in like deep romantic love

Monique Collins 13:48

Can you sing? Can you sing like a little note for us?

Camille Iker 13:50

Absolutely will not!

Monique Collins 13:52

Oh gosh!

Camille Iker 14:01

Don't you ever ask me to sing on this podcast, Monique! How dare you?

Monique Collins 14:08

Disrespectful! Hahaha! Okay, Camille. So, I need to go and do some laundry now. It was fun, though.

Camille Iker 14:16

Yeah, I gotta do laundry.

Monique Collins 14:18

Okay, y'all! So, what songs are in your character or setting playlists? Do you have really messy, dramatic heartfelt songs? Or do you have more mellow, laid back chill songs? Or are a combination of both? Let us know and we'll see you soon!

Outro

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