



EPISODE 160: WARM BODIES: HOW TO FOLLOW-UP A BESTSELLING BOOK – WITH ISAAC MARION

Speaker 1: On this edition of The Self Publishing Show.

Isaac Marion: The most that I experienced at that point was a mildly encouraging rejection letter. So to go from that to suddenly, in a span of about a year the book is published, there's a movie. I'm walking the red carpet next to John Malkovich, and it's like, "What is happening to my life right now?"

Speaker 1: Publishing is changing. No more gatekeepers. No more barriers. No one standing between you and your readers.

Do you want to make a living from your writing? Join indie bestseller, Mark Dawson and first-time author, James Blatch, as they shine a light on the secrets of self-publishing success. This is The Self Publishing Show. There's never been a better time to be a writer.

James Blatch: Hello, and welcome to The Self Publishing Show for another Friday feast of indie news and interviews. My name is James Blatch.

Mark Dawson: And my name is Mark Dawson.

James Blatch: I sound like Pick Partridge, in that introduction then. It took me back to my days on the radio, "Welcome to our Friday feast."

I think I've got better at presenting doing this podcast than I did in 12 years in the BBC because of the relentless nature. I mean, I've done two or three, three interviews, I think, this week. We do this at least once a week in these recordings, and there's no substitute.



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

In fact, I've said this before, talking to people about doing Facebook lives and getting used to it. There's no magic solution, just do them. Just keep doing them, and you'll end up relaxed and hopefully, relaxed and enjoyable companies is what you're trying to be. You're not trying to show off. You're trying to be just a companion.

Mark Dawson: A Companion. James, 60, seeking ...

James Blatch: 60? Rude. Well, that was my birthday last week. I am not 60.

Let's welcome our new Patreon supporters before we do anything else. We are enormously grateful to those of you who sign up through patreon.com/selfpublishingshow because you enable this show to happen and that means a lot to Mark and I. S

Jim Pugh from a Georgia United States, A. O Monk from South Carolina in the US. Angela Sinclair from Texas in the US. From China, I.B be Mellor from Zhejiang. Justin Bell from New Hampshire. Miriam Kay and also, got to be the winner of the best name in the list is Buster Birch from all Orpington near Bromley, in Kent in the United Kingdom. Buster Birch. I wonder what genre Buster Birch writes in.

Mark Dawson: I don't know. We should ask him. Buster, let us know.

James Blatch: Young adult, aimed at young boys kind of just William type. Jenkins. Was it Jenkins? What was that name.

Mark Dawson: Here we go.

James Blatch: Just rambling. My son reads the Tom Gates books. They are novels as such as will be young persons novels, but they're heavily illustrated and for every sentence there's little drawings in between it. They're brilliant for that because young boys are quite difficult to get them reading in the same way that girls do.



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And this week, with the slightly heavy heart as well, I stumbled across Tommy Donbavand's books, *Scream Streets*. I've bought him those as well, that's been delivered today.

I want him to have a look at those to try and get him to read and we should mention Tommy, who's a listener to the podcast and a friend of ours, and somebody who has a brilliant writer who writes in this tough area actually getting kids to read, and was just dealt the worst possible hand in terms of cancer.

He's been blogging about it very movingly and very openly. It's been an esophagus cancer and he's had some terrible news this week. But there's a fact we should say that he's basically been told now by the doctors that it's weeks.

Mark Dawson: Weeks or months. I saw that the day or the day before we were recording this I think it was, and Tommy is asking, he has a Just Giving page.

He's quite reticent to ask for help. But he has asked for help for his family. And also, he's been taking some CBD, which I think is a cannabis-derived medicine, which is quite hard to get in the UK, it is also very expensive. So he sent it below to Just Giving page, which I don't know if you've got it to hand, James, for me.

James Blatch: I'm just looking it up actually, and I will get it out there.

Mark Dawson: We'll certainly mention it a minute, and we'll also put it in the show notes. But we posted in the SPF community, and I saw it posted in 20 books as well, and I think he's asked for 25,000, and I think he was halfway there yesterday.

So definitely, go and click that link and go through. And if you have a few spare dollars or a few spare pounds or whichever currency you use then I think Tommy would be really grateful if you could contribute to that page.



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James Blatch: You can go to tommyvcancer.com, which is Tommy's blog, and you can read about his latest episode and diagnosis and to donate to Tommy's campaign. It is a Just Giving page, it's justgiving.com/crowdfunding/tommyvcancer. And Tommy spelled with a Y. T-O-M-M-Y V cancer.

I don't know what to say. A part of me just wants to hope that there's some mistake has been made, and he's going to defy the odds. But Tommy has been incredibly brave in the way he's dealt with this, and he talks very movingly about telling his two sons and it's very difficult to even think about the situation he's in.

So anything we can do to help Tommy. And he's already thinking about his legacy and his family and that, and we've certainly put our hands in our pockets. We would urge you, if everyone gave, as you say, five pounds or \$5, we have a big community, a lot of listeners to the podcast. We'd make a massive difference to this family's life and who've been blighted by cancer.

Mark Dawson: Absolutely.

James Blatch: We've got a good interview this week coming up in a moment which is about having a massive debut, about having a book that got turned into a big Hollywood film, and how you followed that up and some of the challenges, the unique challenges maybe that brings up.

But before then, we're going to talk about an experience you're having at the moment. You're not quite ready to give us results yet, but you can give the idea of getting into it, which is translation.

So you started to take the idea more seriously. German translations for your book.

Mark Dawson: That's right. Yes. I have mentioned this before. I spoke at an Amazon Academy event in Berlin a couple of years ago. And after the event, I spoke to some writers who were doing quite well including one guy



who was writing at Moscow, and was making, I think six figures a year through selling that.

I started to look into the German market a bit, specifically with regards to Amazon. It's probably the third biggest Amazon Marketplace for books after .com and co.uk, in terms of installed base and all of that kind of stuff.

It was one of those situations where it's kind of there is demand there, but it looks like it isn't swamped in any way compared to the other two markets.

I've got lots of content obviously. Three of my Milton books have been translated by a traditional publisher in Germany, haven't really done anything special, so I doubt I'll do any more deals that way I appointed myself.

But to kind of give myself a test to see how I would be able to do with that, I took my Beatrix Rose three books in the main series and looked into getting those translated. And it's been an interesting experience in that I haven't done it before, and I was a bit naive.

I knew had to find a translator. I don't speak a lick of German, which has been a bit of a problem. But I asked some editors who work in the travel industry for recommendations for the translators I could go to.

The first one I tried was frankly a bit nuts. I discovered after we were kind of getting into talking about the contracts. And obviously, there needs to be contract for this. They're signing rights to a new literary work to me, I have lots and lots of content.

James Blatch: Sorry. Just clarify that. It's a new literary work?

Mark Dawson: Yeah well, it's kind of based off my book, but the translator produces a new work. So there's a new copyright in that work, which needs to be assigned to my company industry for payment.



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I drafted a contract. It was fairly standard. And the first translator was almost offended. Some of the things I just think she didn't understand what the language meant, but she just reacted very badly, and I knew at that point, there's no point in continuing because if that was going to be the first experience was one that I had to kind of try and calm her down.

I wasn't insulting her with what the contract required and failing finish contract. I actually didn't want to do that later on as we're getting into their actual translation.

So I moved off from her. Eventually found a guy called Rainer Schmidt, who has worked on the Stieg Larsson books. He has a great track record. And Raina started working on the Beatrix books and translated all three of them over six or seven months.

And that was when the fun started for me. Rainer was very professional. He sent me the translations, and I don't speak German. So I can't proofread them. And I realized, "Okay, these are new works. Rainer will have made mistakes just like I make mistakes. There will be typos. There will be things that need to be tightened up. I can't do that job. Far from the fact that I am too busy, I also don't speak the language so lots of impediments there."

So I approached a couple of very early fan of my books who actually translated one of my books into German six years ago, probably.

She took a look at it, and then I realized it needed just another layer of professionalism on top of that. So then I found an editor who works in German. And she then worked on the translations.

She and Rainer had a correspondence, and just in the same way that I have a correspondence with my copy editor when I'm working on an English language book.



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It was a long process. It was quite frustrating, expensive. So about 15 to €16,000 at this point. So not something that anyone would be to do, and this is speculative as well. I don't know how many I'll sell.

They went live yesterday and I sold seven of the first one. So I'm still miles and miles in the red. And now I'm getting into saying that advertising accounts, working out how to do Amazon ads in Germany, so that's with an advantage account.

One of the difficulties, as I'm discovering fresh digital, is all those registration pages are in German. So I've been running them through Google Chrome translating them, which is pretty good working out what I need to do.

Luckily, I've got a good contact now in the Amazon advertising marketplace over there. He's helping me with some bits and bobs. So there will be some campaigns starting. But it's been difficult.

But we'll see. The potential upside, the rewards, I think, are quite significant. And hopefully, in a few months time, I better come back and say, "I've made that investment back and now we're in profit" but we'll see.

James Blatch: Yeah well, that's been a piece in the pudding. As we always say, "There's no point in doing this stuff for your own benefit or fun." So we do need to know in a few months time that you're selling books in Germany.

And it's a frustrating thing. We speak different languages, we live in different time zones. It'd be great if the world sorted all that out.

My book is Military History, set in the cold war. And Germany is a great market for that as is the Netherlands actually is a country like Britain, full of planes spotters and geeks about the military for obvious reasons perhaps.



But it's a bit of a non-starter for me with a single book, which it's not going to be viable unless it the take off would be a Booker Prize-nominated, which is, let's face it, unlikely.

So in your position, where you've got a very healthy UK turnover, even you are finding this quite big upfront investment, quite a lot of investment of time.

And as it stands at the moment, no proof of commercial viability.

Mark Dawson: No. I mean, we'll see. I've got lots of different levers I can pull. So Facebook ads into Germany, I'll be running those. Of course, I don't speak German, so we need to get the copy out. I'll draft them and even things like the giveaways I've done.

I'm using all the taxes I'd use for UK, stuff. So he has a giveaway at the end of the book to get a ... I mean, remember, I give away a Milton dossier which works quite well. So I've done one two tricks written by the German intelligence agency.

James Blatch: Ah, brilliant.

Mark Dawson: So again, it is fun to write. So they are reporting on a British agent. Actually, it's in German. So someone in the community actually offered ... a guy called Tom offered to translate that for me. So we've now got a German version with German DSB logos on it, and so all of that kind of stuff.

But again, that all needs to be translated, and I can't do that. I'm kind of relying on the generosity of people who like my stuff and are happy to help me out. But it's challenge.

James Blatch: That is an asset that you've got. You've got a big list of people. I know on that list are going to be some German speakers who can be very happy to help you out.



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Mark Dawson: And I'm very lucky. This is just people I've met on my Facebook page, and in the Mark Dawson Facebook groups. And also in SPF also as well, I've had some help from people in SPF. So I know that's fortunate. And I don't know everyone has access to that kind of pool of people and resources.

James Blatch: You'll find some German readers who'll be advance readers for you, I'm sure on your list.

Mark Dawson: I could do. I probably got six now from just Facebook. I did a post on Facebook so if anyone is German, likes reading German books would you like to look at these? And I have I've got a few. So we'll see.

But now I've got to think of it this way, my brother said to me at Christmas because I turned over, as I've said, over a million dollars last year. And he said, "This must be the only business with a million turnover where there's one employee." And that's it.

I don't employ anybody. I've got contractors; Alexandra does the virtual assisting for me. Stu does my covers. Stuart Grant works on my Facebook page. But these are not employees and they're very much part-time at best.

James Blatch: And you're not the only one.

Mark Dawson: No, no. I know. And the more I think about it, the more I ... Because I'm so busy at the moment. And I'm really tired. I'm pretty much exhausted.

James Blatch: Thinking about taking somebody on full-time?

Mark Dawson: I'd like to, but I don't know. I think I'd want them to be in this office with me.

James Blatch: I'd hate that.



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Mark Dawson: I've got two rooms here, so I mean, I could very easily do that. I could do. I don't know. Well, I'm not sure.

There are a lot of the stuff that we do as authors is, I'd have to give people access to an Amazon account. You can't at the moment. I know Amazon listens to this podcast. One thing I'd love is to be able to grant people access on a limited basis. So if for Facebook ads, you have admins, you have advertisers, analysts, it would be great to have an analyst level so they could look at the data, but they couldn't change the bank account for example.

James Blatch: Or you could do that with infusion software. There's a very layered level of security you grant users. You do that with Zero as well, my accounting software has four, five, levels.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, loads of software will allow different user and roles.

James Blatch: I'm slightly reluctant to think of Amazon making further IT under the bonnet changes because it's a big system. And every time they make a change it does throw up issues as well.

Mark Dawson: This would be minor. This would be a fairly simple thing for them to do. So I would love to see though. It would just make it so much easier.

I could have someone in Germany joins the team to run that for me.

James Blatch: You will receive emails as a result of mentioning that on this podcast. You'll get a short list handed to you.

We're going to talk to a guy called Isaac Marion now. He had a first novel turned into a big Hollywood film called *Warm Bodies*. And he struggled a bit by saying very honest about this. He struggled a little bit about finding a way of sustaining his career after that.



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He's a good writer, no question about that. But there's something to do with the way you are typecast a little bit, genres and so on that. He's dealing with at the moment, and it's been very interesting talking to him. Following up that big start. I think we're going to be listening to him and then maybe Mark would catch up your Hollywood situation after this. But let's hear from Isaac, first of all.

James Blatch: Isaac, I think probably a good place to start would be for you to give us the elevator pitch of who Isaac Marion is.

Isaac Marion: My name is Isaac Marion. I grew up in Washington, in the US, mostly in and around Seattle. I started writing when I was a kid basically, and started getting serious about in my early teens. Wrote a couple terrible fantasy epics, and then got a little more serious and wrote something kind of grounded.

And then spent a few years writing short stories, and then did *Warm Bodies*, and that was my first published book. And I had a very abrupt whirlwind thing happened to me with that one where it kind of came out of nowhere, and people from throughout various industries got interested and suddenly there was a movie, and an agent and all this stuff started happening very abruptly.

James Blatch: *Warm Bodies* was your first published work?

Isaac Marion: It was.

James Blatch: Okay.

Isaac Marion: Technically, my first published work was a comedic review of peanut butter corn puffs, that was published in McSweeney's, of all places. Is technically my first credit, but it was not exactly a major work.



James Blatch: Okay. Well, what an introduction to a creative lifestyle, to have a huge hit strikes away. And people will be familiar, I'm sure with the book, And many people have been through the film.

What was that like. How did it start? Presumably *Warm Bodies* is traditionally published.

Isaac Marion: It was. I actually started self-publishing it kind of. I hesitate to really call that self-publishing because my general MO for all those years of writing books before *Warm Bodies* was to finish it and then immediately print out a few hundred copies and just start put them up for sale on my blog or friends and family and just whoever wanted to buy one.

This was back before there really was any infrastructure for self-publishing. It was pretty much like Vanity Presses and Do it yourself in your local print shop, which is what I was doing.

But I did that for my first three books, and then I did it for *Warm Bodies*, even though that was kind of an inkling that something serious might be happening. I didn't want to wait for it. So I just went right into it.

I think I printed 500 copies and just sold them off my website basically, which was just a blog. I technically started there and had it blew up wide from that point and then has kind of bizarrely come back full circle.

James Blatch: We'll move on to where you are now because I know self-publishing is definitely something that you're doing now. So you got ahead, you printed these books, you sold them out of the boots of your virtual car, on new websites.

And then you said that there was some interest you had, a feeling that there were people circling at that point.

How did transform itself into a published book around the world and a major film?



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Isaac Marion: It was kind of this very drawn out tiny step by step process from the original idea for *Warm Bodies*, which I started as a short story of just a five-page little vignette. And somebody found that on my blog.

And this person considered herself an online talent scout. She wasn't really working actively in the industry, but she knew people here and there, and so she called me up out of nowhere and basically said like, "I think you've got a lot of potential, but let me know when you write something that's a sellable work, not a five-page short story. When you have something worth my consideration basically."

So then, a couple of years passed, and I decided to expand that short story into something bigger. And when I did that, there was kind of chain of introductions that happen from her that led me to this freelance editor who I hired to work on *Warm Bodies* with me.

And then she's the one who actually distributed it throughout the back channel of the industry, and it kind of just fell into the hands of a lot of different people at once.

One of which was my agent, and one of which was the producer who ended up making the movie. So it all happened within weeks of me finishing that first draft. It was very bizarre.

James Blatch: Wow. So people obviously loved it and immediately saw the potential of it. Obviously, you can write, Isaac. And I don't mean this take away from that, but I'm also wondering about the element of timing that sometimes plays a part in this.

Was it zeitgeist at the time? Because I guess it's kind of rom-zom-com. Is that we'd call it, the old Shaun Of The Dead type genre?

Isaac Marion: That's what people sometimes call the movie. I think that it's a little unfair even to the movie, a reductive, shall I say, because I think that a movie has a little more going on than a typical Rom Com would claim to.



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

But I definitely don't think of the book as a comedy. It has a lot of humor in it. But it's very dry, dark humor amidst a lot of pretty heavy themes. So the movie plays up the comedy quite a bit more, enlightens the tone a lot.

But it is kind of a strange mix of tones and genres. I'm not really sure what the Zeitgeist was at that moment as far as genres. I guess that there was kind of a big wave of zombie stuff that came out in those couple of years, which I was not aware of when I was writing the book. I was actually horrified to learn that because I had no idea that I was jumping on the bandwagon.

But I don't know if it's debatable whether it helped or hurt because there was a lot of stuff already in the pipe at that point. And I heard a lot when my agent was trying to sell it.

There were a lot of people who were like, "Well, we already have four zombie things going on, and we don't need another one." And so he had to kind of go above and beyond to explain to them, "It's not really what you think. It's very different from the typical zombie concept." And so it's hard to say if it helped or hurt.

James Blatch: I didn't mean to reduce your books too, I attacked your genre.

Isaac Marion: Oh no. It's not you. Everyone sums the movie up that way. And I don't think the movie has somewhat lower ambitions as far as what the message is trying to get through, and it plays up the comedy, it plays up the romance and it's fair to call it a rom com.

I always cringe a little at the zom-rom-com. It's just, the sound of it. It's goofy. But it is what it is.

James Blatch: I think to be fair to Shaun of the Dead, there's a little bit more to Shaun Of The Dead as well isn't it? But it's still the way people sum it up.



Isaac Marion: Yeah. There's kind of these comedies, they have this vein of truth in them. They kind of blindside you a little bit.

James Blatch: Sure. And on that on note, that theme, I mean, famously, George Romero use zombies as a metaphor, and they are generally used as a metaphor for something.

What deeper meaning did you intend to put as to the metaphor in the book?

Isaac Marion: Yeah, that was the reason that I wanted to write the books. It wasn't like I wanted to do a zombie book and then I came up with what it was about later. It was the reverse of that.

I had some ideas, and some themes I wanted to explore. Some of them are personal, coming from my own life just kind of the experience of trying to find myself, figure out a sense of identity in a time of my life where I was sort of adrift.

And also on a larger scale sociologically, and just kind of philosophically on a human emotional level, to me the plague. And it's not even just metaphorical like it literally is a spiritual condition in this story.

There's no biological virus at play. It's some kind of metaphysical thing that has happened to humanity, and it's a lot of things, but at its core, I think it's sort of just giving up on life, the surrender to despair and just going numb basically kind of an extreme manifestation of depression you could call it on a society-wide scale. There's a lot of different ways I could describe it but there's a few.

James Blatch: Well, that's certainly a familiar story for four well-written books and books that were well received.



It starts with the need to write the book rather than wanting to write the book and then looking around for the need. And it sounds to me like that driver was one of the reasons why the book was so good.

Isaac Marion: I'd like to think so. I think that I would say I wrote it in spite of the genre, in spite of the trend not because of it. It's actually been a bigger problem, I think, than it helped but it just seemed like the right way to tell that story and the right way to explore those ideas.

James Blatch: I think I read on the Internet somewhere that that film made \$100 million. I don't know how they quite quantify those figures.

It was a huge worldwide success, and that must have been a slightly surreal experience for you.

Isaac Marion: Yeah. Slightly. It's kind of a blur in my mind now. It feels like it was a dream sometimes especially since it's remarkable how little can actually change your life overall, when it passes kind of find yourself back in a similar place again, and it's like, "Wow. Did that even happen?" But there are of course changes.

I'd been pushing for years to try to get something published, to get any level of success with that writing. And the most that I experienced at that point was a mildly encouraging rejection letter from an agent.

To go from that to suddenly in the span of about a year the book is published, there's a movie and walking the red carpet next to John Malkovich, and it's like, "What is happening to my life right now?" So surreal doesn't even cover it.

James Blatch: When you were writing it, as you say, going through perhaps a little bit of angst and trying to work out some things in your own life, and then suddenly have success thrust at you. I wonder if that was an entirely healthy experience for you personally? People shouldn't complain about



success, I know. But I'm just trying to think about the personal journey you made.

Was it something that helped you develop or was it a setback in some ways, personally?

Isaac Marion: That's an interesting question. I don't feel like it harmed me psychologically or emotionally or anything. I was never going to be the kind of person that finds success and then goes on a wild ego trip to lose trip lose touch with reality. I've always been kind of assume the worst.

So when good things happen I'm like, "Slow down, it's not going to last. Keep your cool." And that's the approach that I took, so I never really spun off into insanity.

But I mean, it's hard to even imagine a negative from that process other than it presented challenges in my writing career. It's very small relative to the benefits that it had.

But there were certain things that it did as far as just moving forward and writing more books and being typecast with the perception of the zom-rom-com, which is like, "Oh, you're the zombie guy," And will I ever not be the zombie guy.

But that's more professional than that personal, so for myself, it freed me up to write full-time, which is really all I ever wanted. I never had huge ambitions for fame and wealth with writing. I always told everyone when I was working on like, "If I can just afford to buy a decent meal once in a while and not go work in these series of soul crushing jobs that I had at the time. That's all I'm asking for."

So I got that, and I still have that for a little longer. We'll see how much longer it lasts. It's kind of running on fumes at this point. But it definitely did change my life on a fundamental level.



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

James Blatch: We'll talk about the books and the way they're going in a moment, but I've got one more question about the film.

It's an interesting experience. And there's quite a few people who listen to this podcast who've had an adaptation or are in the process or hoping to. So that experience of handing your baby over at some point, because I think Brian's saying the director wrote the screenplay, did he not.

Isaac Marion: Yeah.

James Blatch: His name's completely escaped me.

Isaac Marion: Jonathan Levine.

James Blatch: Jonathan Levine, thank you. He wrote the screenplay?

Isaac Marion: Yeah.

James Blatch: Okay. So he took your book. And this is something a lot of writers never have this experience, this is somebody taking their book, and then writing a story version of it for a different medium.

What was that like? Did you have any input in that at all, or did he refer his ideas to you?

Isaac Marion: I did have some input. I always explain it as kind of consultant level input. I didn't have any direct control over anything or I could veto power. But they actually did come to me at multiple stages of the process and just present to me what they were thinking. And then I could give my reaction and they could take it or leave it.

So throughout the whole thing I mean, before they were writing the script, the producer, the one who triggered the whole thing, stayed in pretty close contact with me and checked in with me to what so some of their ideas how they were going to do some of the visuals and just how they were going to portray the world.



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

And then when Jonathan started writing the script, first he came in, had lunch with me, and talked about his ideas for it and we discussed that at great length. And that was encouraging because I had no idea what they were going to try to do with it.

I kind of assumed since it was the studio that did Twilight, I just assumed they were going to try to replicate Twilight and make it another teen romance thing. And I'm sure that was still in the equation, but talking to Jonathan was kind of like, "Oh, okay." He actually likes the movies that I like. And kind of wants to push it a little further in the direction of art.

And so we had that conversation, and then he would call me once in a while he was writing it and just asked me kind of simple questions like, "What year is this, and what do you imagine the motivations for these people are?" Something like that.

And then I would tell him what I thought, and he would just add it to the plot, basically.

When he was done with the script, I got to read I think two drafts of it. And just marked it up like you would any editing situation and then send it back to them.

But it was all kind of ultimately up to them. It was input and I think they took some of it. Some of the things I advised happened, but I don't know if it was me or a 100 other people making it happen.

I was basically hanging around, I was lurking and watching and even on the set once in a while usually, I wanted to stay back and let them do their thing because authors are sort of infamous for being big divas up in the business of filmmakers and they usually don't want them around for that reason. So I was courteous of that.

But once in a while I would kind of step in and be like what's going on there? And make a comment. And who knows if it was taken seriously or



not. But I felt lucky to be invited on that level because usually even pretty popular authors tend to get shoved off set from what I hear. So I was nobody and my book hadn't even come out yet.

James Blatch: It definitely happen sometimes. And sometimes authors are not a good influence on the medium version of the story, I think. And I think you do the right thing to step back, just a couple of observations about maybe where the story was coming from.

But it is a different beast isn't it? And it's kind of like leaving it to the experts. It's what they do.

Isaac Marion: I understand that. I am a big fan of film too, and yeah, I've written some scripts. And I wanted to direct something, never have. But I get what they're trying to do.

I was never looking at it like, "You're going to make an exact literal translation of my story." I understand that's not possible. And so I was very courteous of like, "You guys know what the big vision here is. how this film is going to be pitched and what you imagine the audience to be. So do your thing." And I'm just kind of looking for moments that could improve whatever that thing is.

James Blatch: After the adaptation, was it always in your mind to turn *Warm Bodies* into a series? Or without the film adaptation, the huge success the first book had, were you thinking about doing something else at that point?

Isaac Marion: I always wanted to do it as a series. I didn't actually think that that was going to be an option when I wrote it. The book in particular, ends very openly. I mean, it literally says, "We're just getting started," on the last page.

There are a lot of unanswered questions, and a lot of work to be done before the world is saved because it's far from rosy at the point that it end.



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

But I mean, this was my first published book. It was a long shot in a lot of ways because it was a pretty far out there concept. I didn't really know how people were going to receive it. If anyone would be able to swallow the whole fall in love with a rotting corpse thing, I just didn't know if it was going to work basically.

And so it wasn't on my mind to approach publishers who were like, "Here's my four-part epic saga about zombies finding the meaning of life." That was just too far from me at the time.

In my mind, I chose to end the story here, knowing most of the stuff that was going to happen after that, but I didn't think I'd actually write the rest of that story because of just this position I was in, and I just didn't think there would be a demand for it.

And then when people actually responded to the book, and not even just that it sold a lot of copies, but the fact that people were reading it. At least a lot of people were reading it kind of in the way that I intended as far as taking it seriously and actually getting involved with the ideas and the characters and not just treating it as a joke.

Then I was like, "Maybe I should write the rest of it because there's a lot of really interesting territory to cover here. I barely scratched the surface of it in *Warm Bodies* as far as the world they live in and kind of what kind of a reality this is, where zombies are real."

It's a little different than the usual zombie scenario and that it's not like we're rotting and corpses appear and people are like, "What is happening? Why are corpses coming back?" They've seen zombie movies. They know what zombies are. And so it's very mysterious that fiction is coming to life, basically.

There's an element of that that's hinted at in *Warm Bodies*, but the world that they live in is much weirder and more kind of surreal than it appears in *Warm Bodies*. So I wanted to expand that and kind of see what else is out



there beyond the little scope of their on clay. And so yeah, when people seemed interested in that, I was like, "Okay. Let's do this."

James Blatch: And your publisher is still on board at that point, so your second book in the series was traditionally published as well?

Isaac Marion: Yeah. The second book was a prequel, and it was a novella. So it wasn't really a major release. They did eventually publish that one.

It had a very convoluted route that started out as an ebook only on this obscure startup platform that my agent created. And then it was published in the UK as a paperback. And then a year later, it finally came out with my US publisher. So it was very strange.

They weren't too keen on publishing a novella or a prequel. Both of those things are market suicide. But I felt like it was a thing that I needed to do next. And so I released that.

And then the *Burning World* was the actual sequel, the actual continuation of the story. And they were on board for that. It had been several years by that point, and they were some concern that people would have lost interest by now. But there were still high hopes and so they did that. And there's a whole lot of topic there as far as the aftermath of that.

James Blatch: There's sometimes a tension between the writer and the publisher. And what would they liked ideally you to have done at that point?

Did they want you to go more down the film treatment route? Did they think that was more commercially viable?

Isaac Marion: Honestly, I guess for better or worse, my publisher was never particularly involved creatively. I've heard stories about people's publishers interfering in a way that movie studios are famous for doing creatively, suggesting what you have to do.



I don't know how common that is with books, and my experience has been mostly they'll make edits. They'll suggest things that they think could be different. But ultimately, it's up to me because I'm the one writing it. And I guess if they really hated what I was doing, they could have just refused to publish it.

But I never really had a conflict like that. They would, of course, would have liked me to publish it a lot sooner. That was the big issue was like it's taking a long time and the heat is cooling off, and I was aware of that. But it a much, much bigger, much more ambitious book that I was doing, and it wasn't going to be the nine-month breeze that *Warm Bodies* was.

I don't even know what it would mean to follow the movie more closely. The movie ends where the book ends. And there wasn't anything else movie-wise produced. So it's kind of up to me to figure out where that would go.

Burning World, in particular is much more cinematic than *Warm Bodies*. I mean, there is a lot of action in there. There's car chases and plane crashes and gunfights. And it's very intense even though it's also like a lot more psychologically heavy.

But I think some people would have seen that as pursuing the Hollywood route. But ultimately, it's probably still not as commercial as *Warm Bodies* was just because it's denser.

But my publisher never really got involved on that level. They never came to me and said like, "We think you should do this." They're just kind of waiting in for my call. And when I said, "Hey, I'm going to do another book." They're like, "Okay, cool." And they were very passive about the whole thing.

James Blatch: How many books in the Warm Bodies series now?

Isaac Marion: Four. And it's over now. *The Living* is the end. Absolutely.



James Blatch: Okay. Were all four of those published?

Isaac Marion: The first three were. I'm just going to call them all books. I mean, some people don't count a novella or a prequel, but they're sequential stories in their own way.

There are three books that were published under Simon & Schuster, a few different imprints but same people. And yeah, *The Living* is my first foray back into the indie world.

James Blatch: And where are you with that? That's now out, I think. Is it?

Isaac Marion: Once again, it's an incredibly awkward convoluted release with this one, where I set a release date for November 13th. And I wasn't able to get the books printed by then. So I went ahead and launched the ebook, which has been available since then.

But the print edition is still being printed right now, and it will come out in about a week. So it's kind of out. It's kind of not. A lot of people are waiting for the print to read it. I think roughly maybe 20% of my following has read it already, but then the holdouts are still waiting to report.

It doesn't really feel like it's out for me. I'm not really an ebook reader. I like to get the paper in front of me and I think a lot of my readers feel similar, so it's kind of a soft release, I guess.

James Blatch: You like the physical book in your hands.

How are you physically producing the book? Is it POD, print on demand or you printing?

Isaac Marion: No. I mean, that was originally the plan. This whole release has been such a train wreck from top to bottom. It started out from the moment that I decided I was going to do it myself. There were this very ambitious plans.



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

My agent has a company called Zola Books, which is a retailer of eBooks and they've got various methods of selling directly from your author's site, which is what I've been doing for a long time. And he had kind of these big plans to have a deal with Ingram Spark.

We were going to have worldwide distribution, and it was going to be not POD, but an actual publishing run through Ingram. And kind of this whole really cool sounding scenario is get the best of both worlds.

And then just bit by bit, this fell through, that fell through, this got delayed, this wasn't as good as it was supposed to be and it just ground its way down until at this point, it's basically right back to where I started, where I'm just having a print shop, print a couple thousand copies.

And I'm going to be selling them by hand, like hand stuffing envelopes and go into the post-office. I definitely didn't intend it to be this way. And I intend to be this primitive and I'm hoping to kind of expand it back into a more aggressive release next year.

But it got to the point where I was committed from the beginning, like it has to come out this year. I cannot stand to push it past new years into the next year where everyone kind of drops off the map in January and I couldn't stand that thought like it has to be now.

And so the release date kept pushing further and it just got to the point where to do this right, to actually make money it's going to take too long and I just want it to come out now. Figure out that the right way to do it next year.

James Blatch: You never call this a soft launch and then go for the better planned one.

Isaac Marion: It's a very small batch in very high-quality, hardcover book. It's going to be very customized. It has all these cool little bits of artwork and maps and stamps and just a lot of bells and whistles that are only



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

possible because I'm using this small printer and kind of sending this out like this. So it'll be kind of a deluxe first edition and then we'll get practical next year.

James Blatch: It might be KDP print-on-demand for everyone else next year but obviously it's an opportunity to pick up a collector's edition at the moment.

Isaac Marion: Yeah, there's only going to be twelve hundred of them made, so we'll see what the next edition looks like.

James Blatch: We should probably give a plug to your website at the moment you mentioned a couple of times is a place where you can directly buy your books.

Isaac Marion: Yes. So that's the only place you can buy them at this point, is my Website which is isaacmarion.com. And you can't get the E-book on Amazon and Kindle and wherever.

But as far as the actual physical copies, it's only there. It's not going to be in stores it's not going to be on Amazon for the foreseeable future, anyway.

So yeah, it's on there and it's kind of above and beyond as far as a book release goes and you buy it there, you get a free E-book included as a immediate download. So if you wanted to read it now, you buy the hardcover.

I'm kind of taking the vinyl records approach where you buy a vinyl, you get a download code and you get both. Which is great because I probably wouldn't ever buy vinyl if I had to also go buy the empty mp3s on the side. So I'm trying that out. I'm not sure why that's not the norm already but see how that works.



James Blatch: I was thinking exactly the same thing. I am an E-book reader. I love reading my E-book but I also like the physical book and I think it's a trick missed by the industry at the moment.

Isaac Marion: It's true.

James Blatch: You need to buy the physical book and get the E-book at the same time of vise vesa.

Isaac Marion: The same exact concept applies that applies with music where people buy, they buy vinyl for the occasional times when they want to really have like a sit down aesthetic experience with the album, where they want to see the artwork and sit in front of their turntable and just zone out to it.

But then there's also the times when you're on the bus and just want to listen to some songs for a couple of minutes. And those are both valid versions of the experience, I think and I think it applies exactly to books where there's times where you just sit in your living room and in front of fire with a good book and you want to just really have that tactile experience. And then there's times when you're on an airplane and you just need to read it on your phone. And so, the concept is there and doesn't cost anything more to include the E-book. So why not?

James Blatch: Yeah, and the Millennials looking can go into Google to look at what a vinyl and turntable is. We'll have to explain that. I'm almost going to say that Isaac is spelled, I-S-A-A-C because I think I'm one of the people who often puts two SS and one A in it and I'm not sure if that happens to lots of people but it definitely happens to me with Isaac.

Isaac Marion: Almost every one.

James Blatch: Oh, really? It's funny isn't it? And even when I've seen the name quite a lot, I think I see the two S's. So some people spell it with two S's?



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Isaac Marion: It's a huge mystery to me because as far as I know, no, it's not ever spelled that way. I mean, there are a lot of famous Isaac's through out history. There's Isaac Asimov, Newton, Brock, and there's always two A's. I mean, in the Bible. Isaac of Abraham. It's Isaac, there's never two S's. Yet 80% of people I meet default to two S's. I don't know where they're getting it. It's out there.

James Blatch: So isaacmarion.com. With Two A's.

Okay, so in terms of self-publishing, can see that you've taken down a certain route by your agent. And for better or for worse, it was a grand plan in place and probably distracted you from what would have been a slightly more ordered plan just in the self-publishing world. And you're now recovering a little bit to that launch.

So this is important. You said you had that big breakout success and it is difficult quite often for people to follow that up.

But you need to cement this now to make this your career because the last thing you want to be doing is going about some 9:00 to 5:00 job, right?

Isaac Marion: Exactly. This is a very strange stage in my life right now because I really don't know what's going to happen with the next book, if I'll be able to even make it that far without getting other employment.

The self-publishing thing is far more valid now and many people are making great careers out of it. And I'm intrigued by that. I do like the directness and the freedom of it, although the freedom is questionable because I've done nothing but work on this since I started.

So it's not exactly easier, but yeah, it's an experiment for me, and I don't know. I'm certainly not doing it right.



I'm a subscriber to the SPF. I actually signed up for one of the couple of the courses, and I started to realize throughout the process that a lot of this stuff doesn't really apply to me in my current situation because I took such a brand route that the way that I'm doing it is just like, "I can't really do this. I can't do that." And this part doesn't make sense for my situation.

So it's hard to find what the efficient way through is for me in this version of self-publishing. Maybe when I get past this first draft and if I keep doing it next year and take it into the more mainstream way of self-publishing, then I'll be able to get the gears turning smoothly again. But right now, it's like just gotta get through this.

James Blatch: I see that your slight problem at the moment is that you've got four books, no three books which are traditionally published and your percentage on those is not going to be the type of percentage that self-publisher needs in order to turn a profit. So I guess that the bottom line is that you need some more books. What's on your mind to say, "This is it for *Warm Bodies*, *The Living* is that is the end?"

What's next?

Isaac Marion: I'm not 100% decided. I have roughly three fairly fleshed out ideas for my next three books. and I'm pretty sure the next one I'm going to do is actually an idea that I initially wrote in my early 20s.

It was my third book, and I wrote it back then. And then I revisited it a couple of years ago to see if maybe I could salvage it and edit it into functionality, but if it's too far gone and it just was to a younger version of me that I'm not interested anymore, but I still really like this concept of the story.

I've been toying with the idea of cannibalizing that story and rewriting it completely. All of my ideas, moving forward, they're all going to be nothing like *Warm Bodies*.



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

None of them are any particular genre. They're certainly not realism in any traditional sense. But they're much more kind of grounded in reality with some kind of weird twist.

So the next one, I haven't gotten deep enough into the concept to really have an elevator pitch for it certainly. But it's basically about a guy who keeps having a recurring dream. He meets this woman in this recurring dream and he eventually comes to realize that there's this alternate reality that is inhabited by the other halves of our personalities, the inner voice basically, that you hear in your head is actually a person. And they live in this dream space.

He starts to visit this world which is just a mirror image of ours, but with different versions of ourselves in it, and gradually loses interest in the world that his body lives in. And it's about this tension between fantasy and reality and trying to figure out his place in that spectrum while also kind of the difference between the two halves of his personality and this woman's personality is. And so it's definitely not zombies, but also pretty weird.

James Blatch: I sense already that there won't be a zombie in sight.

Isaac Marion: No, not for a long time.

I've learned my lesson honestly, with falling into that realm. I never expected to encounter such an urgent need to put things in boxes. And if you have any trace of a recognizable genre, and it's there, and it's nothing like that.

So if you have a zombie walks across the street in the background at some point in your story, you're now a zombie novelist. And this is a zombie novel. If there's a teenager somewhere in the story, it's a young adult.

It's just, they want to shrink it down to the most simple concept they can find. And so I'm very wary of that now because it was it's been frustrating to



be kind of put in those boxes and sent to these conventions where I don't know what's going on. I'm not familiar with the genre because this or that.

I'm looking forward to kind of writing something that has no baggage, just is what it is and people can figure out how to categorize it, but it's not going to be obvious.

James Blatch: Although, the flip side of that, of course, it does make the marketing a little bit more tricky when you can't tick those boxes. I mean, literally, tick those boxes when you're sort of uploading in terms of keywords and category sometimes.

Isaac Marion: That's true. I've struggled with that even with having a reliable tag like zombies because I find that the majority of people who like these books don't like zombies. I hear all the time almost every comment is like, "I'm not really into zombies, but I thought I'd give this a try because it sounded interesting, and I really liked it."

It's the hardcore zombie fans are usually not that excited about the formula being messed with because it's a very hyper-specific genre. And so, when it's tagged at that, and when it's marketed so heavily as zombies something or as young adults or whatever, people decide they want it to be.

I'm not sure how that ends up benefiting me or hurting me in the long run because if you mislead people, then the people who would like it won't ever find it. And the people who won't like it or who think they'll like it, will read it and not like it. So I think it's important to market honestly or else you can end up with the wrong readership.

James Blatch: Yes, it's a minefield in that particular sense, as you say, you stick one zombie in the background, and no zombie author, and then someone read your book and says, "There's not enough zombies in this book."

Isaac Marion: Yeah.



James Blatch: I'm interested in and definitely would love to know how things go for you particularly with your relaunch of *The Living* next year, once you've got your hands more on the indie mechanisms. But I have to say, I've quick glance of what you were doing, Isaac. Seems to be pretty spot on. Your website's good. I can see there's a mailing list going there.

How's big is your mailing list now?

Isaac Marion: I think it's 2,000. I just started this mailing list about less than a year ago. I had it in the background on my website, but no one had really made me understand how important that was, actually.

SPF was one of the people that really drove that home and to me. It's like I really need to be more aggressive with this list because I hadn't really realized why it's so important because I thought, "Well, I had Twitter, I have Facebook, people will find it," but then I started to notice people aren't getting those posts anymore.

The algorithm is so aggressive and so mysterious that I'm a tiny percentage of people who specifically asked to see my post will ever actually see them. So it's like email is the only place left that's safe from the AI overlords that are controlling everyone's lives.

James Blatch: Yes. There's a novel there, isn't there, about that?

Isaac Marion: Yeah, exactly.

James Blatch: There's algorithms in our heads.

Isaac Marion: Yeah.

James Blatch: Okay. Well, Isaac, that's great. We've raced through sort of 40 odd minutes, and it's been great to talk to you, and I think that one of the things that struck me when I did my modicum of research before the interview was the praise and the critical reception you got for your writing, which is outstanding.



The fundamentals clearly are there. You're an exceptional writer.

Isaac Marion: That's especially important for me right now, to remind myself that people did like the books because when I look at this career path and see how *Burning World* suddenly dropped off, when I tried to explain that to people that I can hear in the back of my mind, it just sounds like I'm making excuses for writing a bad book that no one liked. And that's why it failed.

But then I had to remind myself, "No. People actually did like it. There's just other factors at play that are beyond my control." So thanks for reminding me.

James Blatch: It's my pleasure. And one of the issues is in the traditional industry the contracts don't provide as much for the author as I think they should. I think that is going to be redressed in the long run even in the traditional industry because of the independent movement, but it would be nice to see authors being able to sustain their career for a longer period of time, as long as they want based on their writing.

I think you've set a little bit of a challenge for yourself in terms of the genre switch, and the books being literary fiction might be, again, it's pigeonholed. But literary, fiction at least, is a description of a known sort of fiction book. But that's all surmountable.

And you've got a loyal fan base to work with. There are positives there for you, people know your name, a lot of people have read your books, and that's got to be something that you can leverage, as they say, when it comes to really launching the next series.

Isaac Marion: I hope so. That's kind of the thing that I'm clinging onto is that even though the audience has shrunk immensely since *Warm Bodies*, the people who are still here are pretty hardcore. And I think that they , especially when I do make the switch into other stuff, I'm going to be relying on that kind of word of mouth hand selling thing that fans are doing



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

to push through that transition because I'm well aware that my next book is not going to be a huge blockbuster. It's not like it's going to go back to where it was before once they start a new story because like you said, it's harder to market things that don't fit neatly in boxes. And so yeah, it's challenging.

But I'm kind of excited about that challenge almost more so than the current one I'm in because this one is like the story has been successful, and it's just had all these ups and downs, and I'm just trying to reach the end of it, but it's very hard to market the end of the story.

This is the big problem that I'm faced with even publishers, is there were a lot of other publishers that I shopped it around to afterwards who wanted to publish it. But they're like, "We can't publish the fourth book in the series while having three books owned by someone else. We can't cross-promote. We can't do giveaways, and it handicaps you in that process."

And so even psychologically it's kind of like, "I can't really talk a lot about this book because you kind of have to know the other books to get into it," so doing some kind of viral marketing campaign or something, it's different.

I'm really excited to start fresh and have a new book with a new concept that doesn't have any tie-ins to anything else. And I can just be like almost start over with my career and be a new writer with the new thing.

James Blatch: We certainly wish you the best with that, Isaac. And you're doing all of that at a fresh start, in a new house because I think I'm speaking to you from an island somewhere off in the Pacific, I guess is it at the coast of Washington?

Isaac Marion: Yeah. Orcas Islands.

James Blatch: Oh, as in the killer whale orcas?



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Isaac Marion: Yeah, it's spelled that way. I'm not sure actually if it even refers to that because it's not work plural, it's Orcas. But yeah, same spelling and it's a very small little island.

I pretty much threw my whole life away about two months ago, and sold my house in Seattle and got this little log cabin out in the middle of nowhere. I'm running on satellite internet here, hence the awkward delays and video problems.

I decided writing is what I care about most. And yet, somehow I'm spending a fraction of my time on it, and I don't care so much about all the stuff that I'm doing in the city, going to parties and hanging out with people on site. It's fun, I like fun. Not total workaholic, but the priorities are way off.

I decided I needed to take some drastic step to focus. So now I'm in the middle of nowhere, no distractions, no options for fun. And I'm just going to hopefully write a lot more a lot faster.

James Blatch: My heart goes there because I think I'm probably one of a few people listening to this podcast who doesn't occasionally dream of a log cabin on an island, just to be able to sit down and write without those distractions.

Isaac Marion: The rich person model is you have your cabin in the woods and then you have your main home in the city. And I'm trying to simulate that without being rich. I'm starting with the retreat. And then someday maybe I'll get an actual home. Now, I'm just living in the retreat.

James Blatch: I think Karen Slaughter, we spoke to her at ThrillerFest, I think she does exactly that. I think she got a cabin somewhere in the mountains, and she doesn't want her rushing up there. She's sold a few books.

Let's hope next time we speak, you you could be talking just from your pad in the city on your weekends, which should be a nice thing. Isaac, thank you so much indeed for joining us. I really appreciate it. We'd love to keep in



touch and see how things develop for you in the next year, but I definitely want to wish you the very best of luck in cracking the self-publishing side of it, and getting that writing career firmly established.

Isaac Marion: All right. Well, thanks so much.

James Blatch: There we go. Isaac Marion, *Warm Bodies*.

He got that great start and there must have been that moment where you think, "I've done it as a writer. Cracked it as a writer," but it's a bit like being in a band I guess. That difficult second album, that follow-up album, if you think of some of the great albums that have ever happened, the next album one is not always the one that stands out in the long line of albums that the group produces.

Pink Floyd, good example. But how would you see that? I suppose if it happens to you now, Mark, it's a bit different. You've got probably 25, 30, odd books, million-dollar turnover every year. It's the right time for you to surf that wave.

Isaac is in slightly different place, isn't he?

Mark Dawson: Yes. Coming out with the first book and then having lots of success does put you under a lot of pressure.

There are lots of examples of authors who've done very well with first books and then have struggled to replicate that success. There are a number of reasons why: they might have a case of doubt, and they'll be concerned about meeting the expectations of readers. There may have been a rapturous response to the first book and then there's pressure to repeat the trick, which can be very difficult to do.

So it's a very nice position to be in. If you're going to pick a challenge or a problem, this would be a good one to pick.



James Blatch: And he's a great writer, Isaac. His website looked fantastic. And he's working hard at it now. I think he felt to me like he's on the cusp now of finding that place where he's going to be happy as a writer and also going to make it work commercially for him so we'll follow closely with Isaac's story.

But let's catch up with you in Hollywood, big Hollywood mogul.

Can you announce the name of this director, I think, you said is being courted at the moment?

Mark Dawson: No. I can't. But it's quite close. Now they're dotting I's and crossing T's I've had many known from my producer, they're saying that the director, they've gone after, he's ready to go and once he has signed, they'll move on to try and find talent.

James is for those who are pretending to be James Bond. Basil Bond, perhaps. Yes. So we're pushing on. So we'll see.

James Blatch: This is a female lead, isn't it?

Mark Dawson: It is a female lead, yeah.

James Blatch: I tell what, a small tweak to the scripts I reckon I'm in.

Mark Dawson: I can certainly see is you as Beatrix. It'd be great.

James Blatch: It's time we had a leading trans hero. You're not an early adopter, though, are you? Were you just the second trench. So maybe you'll do that next time.

Mark Dawson: What are you suggesting? That I'm in transition?

James Blatch: I don't know what your particular journey is.



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Mark Dawson: Don't mention the journey word or I'll hunt you down and kill you.

James Blatch: This is our second crack at the phone. We had technical difficulty recording this podcast. And you went on a mini-rant about the word 'enjoy'.

Mark Dawson: I did.

James Blatch: Do you want to rant about that again?

Mark Dawson: I'll rant very quickly. So we watched Master Chef last night. And well, Lucy watched that.

One of things I hate is when contestants have to prepare their food and they take it said the critics who are going to have comments on the food. They say, "Oh, I've prepared you a plate of asparagus risotto," with whatever it is you are serving at the moment and they lay the place down, and stand back and say, "Enjoy." And then leave the room. And it makes me want to hit people. Because people do enjoy it.

James Blatch: But everybody falls into these traps. Any master chef dish has to have some celery root puree on it, doesn't it? That's the thing.

Mark Dawson: There needs to be a celery root puree.

James Blatch: Yeah, celery root puree only exists on Master Chef. Nobody in the real world is going to put celery up puree on a decent plate of food.

Anyway, I do like Master Chef and I liked it last night. I was saying to you, you watch at the beginning, there was a knocking on a 60-year-old guy who'd been watching over the years and worked out.

Mark Dawson: Like you.



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

James Blatch: Like me. And then there was this young girl who looked about 12 to me, but I'm getting older, who was actually 21.

Mark Dawson: Kids these days.

James Blatch: And of course brilliantly counterintuitively, the old guy was useless and produced this clear food that basically I could have produced. And the young woman who was 21 was amazing. By the end of the episode, you realize they found a contender.

Fantastic. So really, I liked that. And it sounds like I'm shoehorning in, but that is what we write about. We write about confounding expectations and how people constantly surprise you and everyone's got a story, and that's what, as writers, I sit there in the middle of writing up almost everything I watch, I do think about the story, the narrative how unfolds.

But the TV advert an episode of The Orville or whatever, I think, "How's that worked? Where they're going with this?" And liked it. Picked faults in it, and whatever.

Mark Dawson: Yes, you see, yes. They're all going on journeys and then they tell everyone to enjoy. And I hate them all.

James Blatch: My grandma thing, and I'm now I am officially completely fed up with it. I listened to the Today program, which is the morning news program on the radio. And whenever they have an academic, on whenever they have someone from university, they start every sentence with, "So." I mean, it just seems to be a universal thing in university. So you say good academic, so population increase a few years ago we thought is going to be terrible.

Mark Dawson: You're just in it.

James Blatch: Exactly. So they'll go, "So, we started looking and this." And what's with the word ...



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Mark Dawson: There's lots of that fabled text like, "Let me tell you," is another one.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Mark Dawson: The politicians these days will go, "Let me tell you." Well, it's almost kind of a verbal ...

James Blatch: Like a coma.

Mark Dawson: ... Contrivance to give you another half second of thinking in time. And footballers. I mean, so they're kind of the less educated fashion is, you know. You listen to a footballer interview these days, they'll be like, "You know."

James Blatch: And of course my children use like as a comma in their sentences, but that's quite an American Valley girl thing isn't it?

Mark Dawson: Yes. Yes it is.

James Blatch: Two old men ranting about the way young people speak. That's what this podcast is all about. We could do a whole separate podcast show on that.

Brilliant, thank you so much indeed to our guest Isaac Marion for joining us, and from the isolation of an island. Sounds very nice off the west coast of the United States.

Mark, thank you for joining us. We're going to do an update on my book next week again, which is quite exciting. And no movie deal yet.

Mark Dawson: Is it finished?

James Blatch: No book. No book yet.

Mark Dawson: No book. Okay.



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James Blatch: You have to wait for the update.

I'm going to talk a little bit about the process, the Author Accelerator process. I could tell you how much money I've paid, what service I'm getting out, and whether I think it's been worth it or not. We'll talk about that next week.

We also have an interview with a writer from New Zealand who is a subgenre of a subgenre, of a subgenre person, who understands the particularly the fantasy broad genre very well, sees these subgenres popping up all over the place, and writes into them commercially successfully. So really interesting interview from that point of view.

That's what's come next week. Until then, I'm going to say have a great week. I'm going to say goodbye.

Mark Dawson: It's goodbye from me.

James Blatch: It's goodbye from him. Goodbye.

Mark Dawson: Tada.

James Blatch: We have to say goodbye together at the end.

Mark Dawson: Okay, yes.

James Blatch: We'll rehearse that next time.

Mark Dawson: Okay.

James Blatch: Bye-bye.

Mark Dawson: Bye-bye.

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