

[The Interviewer]

So, what are we doing this for again?

[Stephen M.A.]

Revenue.

[The Interviewer]

Ah, yes. You did warn me this was coming.

[Stephen M.A.]

Okay, can you not go breaking the fourth wall *immediately* please? I can do this without you just as easily, you know. Stick to the script. For crying out—

[Int.]

(clears throat)

Interesting release timing, given the subject matter of our little story here, wouldn't you say?

[SM.A.]

Mm. Although actually, it's entirely coincidental, believe it or not.

[Int.]

Oh?

[SM.A.]

I started writing Tiny Planet last December. And in fact, by the time quarantine started to become a reality in March, the story was more than halfway done.

[Int.]

I suppose it is a very versatile parable, given how consistently the rich and powerful misbehave in this world.

[SM.A.]

Yeah, tell me about it. No, this story would be relevant for *many* catastrophes, because they all stem from many of the same core triggers, in my opinion.

[Int.]

Agreed.

[SM.A.]

Well of course, you're inside my head.

[Int.]

Alright, Mr. Fourth Wall. Moving on.

[SM.A.]

I'd had the concept of an unbeatable but easily divertable armada attacking a planet for more than a decade. Actually, the initial concept was much more in line with a sort of Gundam or Space Battleship Yamato aesthetic, but since I'm not personally drawn to that specific flavor of science fiction very often (outside the hints of it that often appear in Our Lord and Savior

Ghibli's work), the idea never went any further. It wasn't until I realized I was ready to write a western-style political satire dramedy that the pieces started to click thematically, and the Tiny Planet setting began to take shape.

[Int.]

Are there any characters you particularly identify with? Am I a stand-in for you?

[SM.A.]

What? No, of course not, don't be absurd. Wait—is that question even in the script? I remember very clearly making sure there was no insinuation of autobiography, because it is NOT—

[Int.]

You know what, I have a penthouse to get back to. How about I just skip past all the malarkey you've got here and we get to what really matters.

...

Mm.

...

Mm-hmm.

...

(snorts) Please. You wrote this?

...

...

Okay, that'll do, folks! Thanks so much to Matt for having us! Grab Tiny Planet Filled With Liars on Kindle Unlimited today!

[SM.A.]

I really hate you sometimes.

[Int.]

Goodbye!

[SM.A.]

Goodbye.

[The Interviewer]

So, tell me what you think about love.

[Stephen M.A.]

Love bites.

(laughs)

[The Interviewer]

Har, har. Thank you to our host, by the way.

...

Did you really just fake laughter in *writing*?

[Stephen M.A.]

I was really laughing.

[Int.]

(sighs)

Yes, I know.

[SM.A.]

It's interesting, actually. Obviously, as you know, I went into this book completely focused on the thematic and plot angles. All the characters that populate this little planet now just sort of sprung out of me when it was time for them in the story. It was an unusual writing process in that way, for me at least.

...

Anyhow, through the course of those characters developing into real people—at least inside my mind—relationships began to build themselves organically. Quite strongly, in several cases. Especially by the end.

[Int.]

Mm.

[SM.A.]

I'm afraid anybody looking for rose petals and heartfelt declarations is likely to be disappointed.

[Int.]

Indeed.

[SM.A.]

Still, it's my opinion that, despite my focus on the plot while writing, it's the relationship between these characters that builds the ultimate spine of the narrative. They don't often take the spotlight, but it's my hope that they all shine through so strongly in the fabric of everything else that it still has an impact. Certainly, there are still several points in the tale that choke me up, even now. And *definitely* did while I was writing. Embarrassingly so, in a few cases.

[Int.]

Agreed.

[SM.A.]

Well, sure, but you're in here with me, so just let me feel my feelings, okay?

[Int.]

Seriously? Why would you remind me of that? Here we're just starting to have a serious conversation for once, I'm enjoying my autonomy, away from your quarantine nutjob—out here in the real world like a big—

...

You know what, why don't we just wrap this up? I have a penthouse to get back to.

[SM.A.]

Uh, I wrote *several* more questions for—

[Int.]

Yes, yes, I've read them. Let me just skip to the important bits, okay?

[SM.A.]

(sighs)

Fine, go ahead.

[Int.]

And that'll do us, folks! Thanks so much to Love Bytes for having us! Grab Tiny Planet Filled With Liars on Kindle Unlimited today!

[SM.A.]

I really hate you sometimes.

[Int.]

Mm, yes, I can feel the fabric of it.

[SM.A.]

Goodbye.

[Int.]

Goodbye!

[The Interviewer]

Who would you say your favorite character is? I'm presuming you won't be pretending not to have one.

(chuckles)

[Stephen M.A.]

No, of course not. But actually, I think it was more a matter of having a particular favorite character at a particular point in the story. I think in the end it's probably pretty obvious which character is my "hero" at any given section. The favorite.

[The Interviewer]

But never me.

[Stephen M.A.]

Well, no. Sorry.

[Int.]

I told you from the start you'd begin to hate me as soon as you let me start to get autobio—

[SM.A.]

It is NOT autobiographical—I mean, YOU are not autobiographical! You are NOT a stand-in for me! For crying out—

[Int.]

It's Zhou, isn't it.

[SM.A.]

...

(laughs)

Yes, it is. Of course it's Zhou. She was the first, and the last. It could only ever have been her. She's the only reason I turned this into an entire world.

[Int.]

Bless her mean and cranky heart.

[SM.A.]

Cheers.

[Int.]

We don't have a drink. Quarantine, remember.

[SM.A.]

(sighs)

Yeah, I know. Also I don't really drink.

[Int.]

(sighs)

Yeah, I know.

[SM.A.]
Can I be honest?

[Int.]
I don't see why you'd bother starting at this point in the game, but sure, go ahead, it's your word count.

[SM.A.]
I came into this with a firm concept, and a firm emotion. Mine. Anger. You know all the reasons.

[Int.]
Yes.

[SM.A.]
But the only reason this is likely to become a series now is because Zhou is the story. I'll be writing the next two books for her.

[Int.]
Aw, that's sweet.

[SM.A.]
Is it?

[Int.]
You'll take a sandal to the throat if you say that to her face, though.

[SM.A.]
Well luckily you're in there with her and I'm out here ... uh ... with you ... you know what, let's just wrap this up.

[Int.]
Probably for the best. Thanks so much to MM Good Book Reviews for having us! Grab Tiny Planet Filled With Liars on Kindle Unlimited today!

[SM.A.]
Goodbye.

[Int.]
Goodbye!

[The Interviewer]

Talk to me about how your characters interact with the split you've chosen between prose chapters and transcript chapters.

...

Oh, sorry, forms of questions, right.

...

Uh, talk to me about how your characters interact with the split you've chosen between prose chapters and transcript chapters?

...

You know, *you* wrote this sh—uh, stuff. I don't know what you want from me. I mean—want from *me*?

[Stephen M.A.]

Wow. That was ... something. I can really tell we've been doing this all day long.

[The Interviewer]

Please, just answer the question.

[Stephen M.A.]

It is interesting actually, I was thinking about it earlier. Lucky you.

[Int.]

Very loose usage of two of those words, but continue.

[SM.A.]

Well, there are a few characters who exist really sharply on one side of that divide, right?

[Int.]

Kudaibergen.

[SM.A.]

Yes, exactly, the Admiral is exactly who I was thinking of. Of course, part of it is because she's meant to carry some mystique—the unreachability of command and so on—so she tends to be talked *about* rather than interacted with directly by the viewpoint characters. But still, she definitely exists almost entirely within the dialogue-only transcript sections.

[Int.]

Yet, I'd say she's one of the strongest characters in the narrative.

[SM.A.]

Oh, most definitely. By design, but also just by force of the personality she sort of built for herself as the story continued to be revised.

[Int.]

And on the other hand, there's Bart.

[SM.A.]

Mm-hmm. He straddles both sides of the line, and in fact his first interview is the only reason the transcript style even exists in the story still. But by the end he definitely holds the most

presence in the prose chapters—in large part because he becomes such an important support system for *you*.

[Int.]

Let's not get mushy here, it's nearly dinner time.

[SM.A.]

Well far be it for me to keep you from sulking in there and yelling at me for crunching too loudly, huh?

[Int.]

Are you seriously—alright, you know what, let's just wrap this up and take a break.

[SM.A.]

I really hate you sometimes.

[Int.]

Until next time, folks! Thanks so much to Valerie Ullmer for having us! Grab *Tiny Planet Filled With Liars* today on Kindle Unlimited!

[SM.A.]

Goodbye.

[Int.]

Goodbye!

[The Interviewer]

Thank Jupiter, this is the last of these we have today, right?

[Stephen M.A.]

Yeah, I'm pretty sure.

[The Interviewer]

Thank fu—uh, thanks for the memories, that is. This one's about your writing process.

[Stephen M.A.]

WHAT? I literally *just* got done *doing* that! I don't want to talk about it.

[Int.]

You're the one who booked this, I don't know why you're yelling at me, especially since I'm in here with you to begin with. Capital letters still hurt my ears, you know.

[SM.A.]

For crying out—

...

Alright, fine. Go ahead.

[Int.]

How much did your film background play into your *obvious* continuing addiction to screenplay-style formatting as revealed here, when you decided to write the book originally?

[SM.A.]

None at all, actually. I literally did not realize this was going to become a story about interview transcripts until that first interview with Bartimus suddenly popped up after the introduction chapter. I think I was doing it as shorthand at the beginning, to be honest. But very quickly I started giving myself the freedom to make jokes with the format itself, and that sealed the deal.

[Int.]

Yes, you do like to make yourself giggle, don't you.

[SM.A.]

We're due some missing years on that front, wouldn't you say?

[Int.]

Valid point.

[SM.A.]

Anyway, I'm actually very happy with how it turned out. I'm aware that this is a more complicated style of writing than most popular fiction in 2020—especially genre fiction. I think, even for the readers who are completely on-board with my voice during the prose chapters, there's still *so much* utility to be found in breaking that up with ... completely straightforward, momentum-driven dialogue interludes. I think I'll find it difficult to go back to doing it the usual way for whatever future series takes that honor.

[Int.]

And only then can I finally rest.

[SM.A.]

Alright, drama much. Let's just wrap this up, it's dinner time.

[Int.]

Probably for the best. Do NOT have nachos again, I can't stand the sound in here.

[SM.A.]

I really hate you sometimes.

[Int.]

Yes, I've seen your notes. Until next time, folks! Thanks so much to Horror Tree for having us!
Grab Tiny Planet Filled With Liars, out now on Kindle Unlimited!

[SM.A.]

Goodbye.

[Int.]

Goodbye!