

EGSM 9: Yarr! (Pirates)

Content Warnings

- Explicit language
- Innuendo
- Discussions of: racism & colonialism, death (inc. murder), violence (inc. guns), trauma
- Mentions of: homelessness, kidnapping, sexism, war, alcohol, ghosts, surgery, slavery, suicide

HELEN

Was it 'you wouldn't download a car?'

NEMO

I wouldn't download a car, that's what was going through my head!

(laughter)

JEREMY

Right, right, right...

HELEN

My head immediately was...

(imitating guitar)

DER NA NA NA NA NA, DER NA NA NA NA NA, DER NA NA NA NA NA!

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(laughter)

FAY

Yeah, yeah, yeah!

HELEN

Absolute banger!

[Show Theme - Intro]

HELEN

Hello friends and fans and welcome to Enthusiasm. I am your host, Helen Gould, one of the best Rusty Quillers...

(laughter)

And today we are talking about pirates. Don't laugh, I will defend my title of best Rusty Quiller against any and all comers.

(laughter)

Anyway, time for pirates and I am extremely...I don't, I keep trying to think of like different words that mean happy, and for some reason my brain went 'blitzed' just then, but I think that means drunk!

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(laughter)

So, instead, I will just go with happy – I'm very happy to be joined by Fay, Jeremy, and Nemo. And as always, we're gonna introduce ourselves in alphabetical order, so, Fay, what are your pronouns and what do you do?

FAY

My pronouns are...ah, let's see...my pronouns are ze/zir or they/them. I will answer to either of those. And I am a voice actor, a performance poet, and a business change manager, but that's nothing to do with Rusty Quill.

HELEN

I had no idea you were a business change manager!

FAY

Yeah! That's how I pay the rent, for the most part! Mostly telling people, 'are you sure? I've made a list...are you sure you want to do that?' for the large part of my job.

(laughter)

HELEN

That sounds about right. And Jeremy, can we have your pronouns, and can you tell us what you do?

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JEREMY

Yes, I am Jeremy, I use he/him pronouns, and I am the writer, creator slash producer slash director... I think I do everything for the Storage Papers podcast. Pretty new to Rusty Quill.

HELEN

Aww, well welcome aboard, we're extremely happy to have you here.

JEREMY

Glad to be here, thank you.

HELEN

Yay! And last, but absolutely not least, Nemo, can you give us your pronouns and tell us what you do?

NEMO

Hi, my name is Nemo Martin, I use they/them pronouns and I am currently writing a new podcast for Rusty Quill called 'Trice Forgotten' and it's about pirates and it's cool!

(laughter)

HELEN

Woo-hoo! Alright, okay. So, let's dive right in. Someone...a lucky volunteer, please, explain to me what is so interesting about pirates? For me, it is the fashion sense...

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(laughter)

I do not know if that is the same for all of you.

JEREMY

Can I jump on this one first...is that okay?

HELEN

Absolutely!

JEREMY

So, I guess for me what's interesting is how like modern society has warped the personification of pirates. Historically they were very bad people. Now, they're common in entertainment, right?

HELEN

I mean, we never have bad people in entertainment, that would be...

JEREMY

No, never, never...

HELEN

That would be terrible and wrong!

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(group laughter)

JEREMY

But it fascinates me how that happens, and I mean, I'm a Pirates of the Caribbean movie fan, so you know, I can't judge, but at the same time, when you look at the actual history of the stuff that's happened it's like whoo...I can't think of many other groups we've done that for.

FAY

Apart from you know, con artists in the many many films and TV programmes we have about glorifying that kind of thing.

NEMO

What are con artists but land-loving pirates, jeez...

(group laughter)

NEMO

Weaker!

JEREMY

Bank robbers, thieves...

HELEN

Con artists...pirates of the land!

(group laughter)

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FAY

There's lots of media about...besides, if you start looking at what, I don't know, the East India Company got up to during their time, it's a very similar kind of period as we talk about the golden age of piracy, it's very similar to - for probably no coincidence - the golden age of the East India Company and the shit they got up to. I wouldn't wanna glorify them. If I had to glorify one of those two, I would glorify the pirates, who at least were, mm, democratic and weren't trying to run entire countries, you know, just to make a profit out of them. I get a bit passionate about this!

NEMO

Yeah, I was like, oh, do I throw in my like, pirate facts so soon, but I was like thinking...

FAY

Yes! Yes!

HELEN

I would love to hear some pirate facts!

(laughter)

NEMO

Um well, mostly...I'm writing a musical currently called Asian Pirate Musical, which is about Asian pirates and it's a musical.

FAY

So cool!

NEMO

And there is one pirate...we refer to her as Shih Yang, but she's mostly called Zheng Yi Sao, but that means 'the wife of Zheng Yi', so we're like no, we're going to call her Shih Yang, which was more of her name. So, she was a Chinese nineteenth century pirate and when I was doing research for the musical which happens to be very helpful here, this writer called Yoriko Ishida, she was writing about how at the time in China, a lot of the piracy started because there was a population boom in China, because of the Opium War... Britain again doing another great thing...and there were like, several population booms which just forced loads of people out into the sea, and so Shih Yang was able to like basically profit off of the amount of people going into the sea and basically becoming homeless because land became such a luxury and made a whole fleet out of people who suddenly found themselves without any land and stuff. And yeah, Ishida was writing about how...what you were saying about like it's become so glorified, specifically because of this race thing that was happening at the same time, like the creation of ideas of like, oh, this powerful Chinese fleet that are capturing loads of white British soldiers and naval officers who are fighting. And so, yeah, like there's this... yeah, a combination of like Hollywood, like ideas of like, 'oh, pirates!' And like the glorious kind of like, you know 'golden age', moving into Zheng Yi Sao and nineteenth century and like...oh! Like, pirates have more villainous qualities now because they were like actually people of colour dominating white people. So yeah, there's a really interesting transition there. That was my pirate spew, got it out early!

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(group laughter)

FAY

Yay! Info dump time.

HELEN

We love a pirate spew!

(laughter)

JEREMY

I'm glad I didn't say 'their boots'!

(group laughter)

HELEN

That's okay, I said that, I said that. I do kind of get where you're coming from, Jeremy though, in terms of...pirates were typically like the bad guys in a big slew of fictional media, and then, I guess you mean that like lately they've become underdog heroes.

JEREMY

Yeah, yeah... it's... for me it's you know, I'm all for entertainment and I can take it with a grain of salt, but it's interesting to see how people kind of twist it to put the Hollywood spin on it and also to make it more... I guess just more entertaining? I personally, I love hearing about - one of the other things is that

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like treasure you know, at least off the coast here in the US, you know the coast of Florida has treasure hunters all over the place because there's shipwrecks out there. You have people spending their lives just going out there looking for that stuff. It's amazing how people can get really wrapped up into this world, you know.

NEMO

Mmm.

HELEN

That's really interesting, I hadn't thought about there still being pirate ships and pirate wrecks out there.

FAY

Oh yeah.

HELEN

But! Fay, tell me what you're so interested in when it comes to pirates?

FAY

Oh gosh, a lot of that I guess, you know. Not just the long, curly hair and beard aesthetic which I rock more, but, oh, I guess I was introduced to pirates quite early. My grandparents had one of these, had this massive, like, bigger than my torso even now, kind of hardback books, with a skull and crossbones engraved on it. If it had a soft cover, it had long since lost it, and it was a lot of very densely written text and you know, reproduced engravings about piracy. And

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one of the things that you saw in there that you didn't see... because it's the 70s when I was, you know, a little kid, you didn't get to see women taking that same part in, you know, in swashbuckling and adventure and all the rest of it. Anything where people were waving swords around on the TV, no matter how old the films were, they were generally male. But in the pirate books, you were seeing the likes of Bonny and Grace O'Malley and all the rest of it, including some who mistook each other for male pirates and all that kind of interesting confusion and stuff. And, that along with the fact that more recently discovering that how much more democratic the privateers were, for example. You know, that has really made me go, we've been faced with a lot of, mm, propaganda from, well...the East India Company...I don't know, the inheritors of that...about what piracy means and maybe it's a more...it's a more complex layered thing, so that's something I guess I started reading about more about 5 to 10 years ago, so yeah, the aesthetic is fabulous and you know, swinging from the rigging and all the rest of it, but yeah. It's something that I watched a lot as a kid, you know, read about when I was very small and it's sort of been threaded through lots of themes throughout, and it's still something we have very mixed ideas about what it means, even in, just in the first two minutes of this conversation we've had several different versions of what...of what piracy means. So yeah, all of that really, I guess.

HELEN

Well, that's definitely part of the charm, the fact that there are, like, lots of different archetypes I guess, of what a pirate is. Nemo, what do you reckon? What's interesting to you about pirates?

NEMO

I think very similar, like the gender rebellion and the, well, the general theme of rebellion I guess, and like...part of that like Hollywood, but also like most media things, like romanticisation of piracy and like, I guess, sticking it to the man and...

(laughter)

Just being really like able to do what you want in a certain way, like yeah, like Fay was saying, gender presentation, but also like if something doesn't seem right, like lawfully...if it's lawful but not right, I feel like a lot of like fictional pirates have been very much like, 'well, I can fix that by being cool and badass, and like killing a cop', like, that's very like, exciting?

(laughter)

Yeah, so I feel like, yeah. And I guess also silly, because I think a lot of like I guess bandits and stuff...I guess the Red Riding Hood - not Red Riding Hood, the other one - Robin Hood! Is very like heroic in a certain way that's very like goody-two-shoes?

HELEN

Chivalrous!

NEMO

Whereas pirates get to like have that silliness as well. They get to have like the playfulness as well.

FAY

I'm intrigued to know which Robin Hood you're reading about...but okay, yeah!

(laughter)

HELEN

Oh? Are we gonna go on a Robin Hood tangent?

FAY

We might do I suppose, but...yeah, well there's as many different versions of Robin Hood as I guess there are of...I don't know, Blackbeard, but that's the thing, figures like that can be whatever we need them to be, but generally as you say, they're about rebellion, they're about doing what's right not necessarily what's lawful, but again, it's about...if you got hold of the imagery and what they've used it for as to what is the prevalent notion you have of it. I was also thinking while you were talking, Nemo, about how we don't say music or TV or video theft, we say piracy. We don't call it larceny or theft or whatever, people always call it piracy, it gives it that particular cache, which yeah, like you say, unlawful but in most cases seen as being rebellious and moral. I like that.

JEREMY

When I was...oh gosh, I wanna say in the 90s when I was in high school, they came out with these, kind of previews to the movies where it was, you know, they had 'Be Kind, Rewind' and then they had this guy that was going around

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selling pirated DVDs out of his trunk. And it was this PSA of like, you know, I forget the slogan, 'don't be a pirate', but it's basically... 'it's the same as theft', you know. And it's got this...

HELEN

Was it 'you wouldn't download a car?'

NEMO

I wouldn't download a car! That's what was going through my head!

JEREMY

Right, right, right!

HELEN

My head immediately was...

(imitating guitar)

DER NA NA NA NA NA, DER NA NA NA NA NA, DER NA NA NA NA NA!

(laughter)

FAY

Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah...

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HELEN

Absolute banger!

(continues loudly imitating guitar)

(laughter)

FAY

Was it off-putting? Was it? It was, yeah, DER NA NA NA NA NA...

JEREMY

But it sticks in your head...

HELEN

It does!

JEREMY

...because how many years later?

FAY

Yeah, yeah.

NEMO

In Japan, they have this one which is like these two sexy dudes in suits, but instead of heads, they've got like a police siren and a video camera, and like the amount of fanfiction there is around these two...it's like, wild!

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(group laughter)

JEREMY

Oh my gosh!

NEMO

Not that I've looked!

FAY

No, no, no!

HELEN

Of course not!

FAY

That is beautifully specific. Ah, love fan fiction for that. Well, that's, I mean I consume and write a fair amount of historical fanfiction and the sheer quantity where people have gone 'eh, this is great, but what about pirates?' And just everything gets turned into pirates if at all possible, and I fucking love that! Yeah...

(laughter)

Yeah, if you want to add extra swash-buckle and open frilly shirts...pirates!

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NEMO

Oh, the open shirts is definitely...yeah, I forgot to mention that, but yeah, that is definitely the appeal, right?

(laughter)

HELEN

Yeah. I like...and this was a Black Sails meme, but someone was saying how they love that one of the pirate aesthetics is like to have massive white shirts, it's like 'you shall have no idea what my torso looks like, but look at my butt in these tight black trousers!'

(group laughter)

'Everyone shall know!'

(laughter)

NEMO

Yes, absolutely!

HELEN

Anyway...so, the next question I wanted to ask was whether we had any favourite pirates, either from fiction or from history? I would like to start with someone else, because I forgot about Pirates of the Caribbean because I was

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so much thinking about Black Sails, and I forgot that was a piece of media that is available.

(laughs)

Does anyone have one that like particularly captures the imagination?

FAY

Yes, I do have a favourite pirate.

HELEN

Oh?

FAY

I'm just... erm, okay, I'm just going to jabber about this person and then you can, I don't know, fast-forward me if it gets too much. Erm, but I'll try not to info-dump. So, I'd kind of vaguely knew about her and then I was asked...I was asked to write of all things a sonnet about Grace O'Malley, so of course, went deep into the research at which point I realised to put this woman's life into 14 lines of English poetry just seemed a bit rude, so I had to kind of lampshade that in the poem itself. But, I mean, Grace O'Malley was like the definition of gender non-conforming badassery. She, she was part of a noble family in Ireland and she'd...

HELEN

Oh!

FAY

Yeah, and she'd grown up at the time when England mostly left Ireland to its own devices, just kind of went, yeah, just send us the tribute stuff but we won't pay too much attention, but...yeah, so she was part of this kind of sea-faring family and just the sheer number of apocryphal stories that surround her, including...she wanted to go off on a ship that was raiding the coast of Spain as a kid, and her dad said, 'you can't go, you have long hair which will get caught up in the ropes, so that's why girls can't go to sea.' So, she turns up the next morning with her hair cropped to practically nothing, and 'ta da!' And her dad went 'okay, touché, fine', and off she goes! She apparently gave birth to I think her first child on board ship, and less than an hour later, the ship was attacked by, I think, Turkish raiders off the Barbary coast, at which point she just gets up off the childbed and sets to with the sword to fight off the rival pirates I guess, the way of putting it...

NEMO

Oh my God...

HELEN

Wow...

FAY

She just...and that's it – every story you read, and there are a lot of them, and some of them are a little bit contradictory, but every single one basically says she led from the front, she fought with her men, she was a fantastic, I guess

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general, admiral, however you're going to put it. So, she was a good strategist, she was just unstoppable as well. And when a rival Irish nobleman killed her second husband, she didn't just go and take her vengeance on his main castle, she went 'that was good, but what about everything else he owns? Let's burn it to the ground!' But then by the 90s, 16, sorry 1590s, and she's in her 60s by this point I should point out, England is starting to take a much more hands on approach to ruling Ireland. Some more troops are being landed, you can see... I mean, we could go off into a whole tangent about how that's kicked off... everything we're still seeing. But she...they're being basically harassed, they're being chased from place to place, she's not able to settle in any castle for any, or any home for any length of time or whatever still in her 50s and 60s, and then her sons are captured and taken to England. She gets described in a letter to Queen Elizabeth by the guy doing most of this – Richard Bingham, as 'nurse to all rebellions in the province.' And that also has a perfect iambic pentameter, so I was able to just have that as a line in...

HELEN

Oh, excellent!

FAY

Right? Ooh, excellent! I'll have that, yoink! But this is the great bit. She heads off to England because she's like enough is enough, and manages to negotiate with Queen Elizabeth directly, both of them speaking in Latin, because neither of them spoke each other's native language...

HELEN

Oh!

FAY

Right!? She manages to negotiate for not only the release of her sons, but the release of her lands so that she's able to go back and be you know, reunited with her clan and all the rest of it and take her place in her...for, of course for not raiding any more English ships. No, no, mm-mm, no, I won't do that! But also to have an apology delivered to her and she insisted - this is the bit I love - that the person who had to hand her castle back and give her an official apology was this Richard Bingham!

(laughter)

And she just...Queen Elizabeth tried to make her like...erm, I can't remember, like a duchess or a countess or something like that. And she said, 'no, you and I are princes, I am of equal rank to you. Thanks, but no, I'm not going to take a step down for an English title.' And just...ah, there's so much of that! She died at 73, and she was still heading out to sea with her men, as far as I can tell, right into, like towards the, right to the end of her life, and urgh! She's just amazing, and I'm going to stop now because I could go on!

(laughter)

HELEN

No, that's really cool. I really appreciate all that.

NEMO

I thought it was really interesting that a lot of her life like echoes Shih Yang's life as well...

FAY

Yes!

NEMO

...very, very similarly. And like, though Shih Yang at the end, like the government was like, 'hey listen, like, we are fighting the British and the Portuguese, we do not need to be fighting you too, can you like come and destroy them for a bit?' And she's like, 'yeah alright,' and she like, did that for a bit. And then they were like 'alright, cool, you did a good job.' And she's like 'cool, I'm going to be a salt trader' in scare quotes, did that for bit and then was like, 'actually, you know what? I think I'm gonna be a pirate again.'

(laughter)

So, kind of sold out, but then what is selling out? You know. Yeah, interesting. Yeah it's just very interesting to see that, like, multiple women...I think there was another woman as well, her name was Sayyida al Hurra. I don't know if I'm pronouncing that properly, but...fifteenth century woman who had a very similar life as well. So, yeah, it's very cool to see like...well, you know, people that don't get talked about very often, but they often have very, very cool lives.

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HELEN

So, is one of those your favourite?

NEMO

Heh...even after mentioning a very cool female Muslim pirate from the fifteenth century, I was like...well, no, it's the...the King Captain from the Pirates of Penzance obviously!

FAY

Yes!

HELEN

I've never...I don't know the Pirates of Penzance. Tell me more about this King Captain?

NEMO

It's a comedy opera by this duo called Gilbert and Sullivan...

HELEN

Oh, yes, yes.

NEMO

Yes, yeah. And it's the origins of the...oh my God, what's the guy's name, the...I am the model of a modern Major General...

(laughter)

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Yeah, it's that's one which then got pirated...well, not pirated, put into Hamilton...

HELEN

Oh yes!

NEMO

...lovingly pirated.

(laughter)

HELEN

Borrowed!

(laughs)

NEMO

Yeah, yeah. And he's just, the pirate captain, pirate king in Pirates of Penzance is just so like...he's a dweeb, like...

(group laughter)

Like he's just a huge nerd. Like he's such a failure of a pirate captain and I love him so much, because yeah, I think he does take all of the, like, tropes of being a pirate, and it's just like you know, the lovingly... like he's an orphan, and he's so sad, and that's the only reason that he's going into piracy, and he's got this

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band of like lonely boys who are all orphans and we're gonna like steal all of your women because that's what pirates do! And they're all like, okay, but they just go on a jolly a bit, and just get drunk and like sing some songs...

(laughter)

And at the end they're like, 'woo, cool, yeah like we didn't have to like be pirates I guess!' Like...

(laughter)

HELEN

Jeremy, who's your favourite?

JEREMY

Mine has always been Blackbeard and, you know, I think just historically his life was kind of like a rollercoaster.

HELEN AND FAY

Mm-hmm.

JEREMY

You know, he was one of the most successful pirates, you know, at least that I've read about. But the fact that he did all of that stuff, he got pardoned, and he sort of like retired on the East Coast in the United States, I think it was a town called Bath, which I believe is in North Carolina. But then, there's so much mystery about how he kind of got into his last battle, his last

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engagement where he ended up losing his life. He was a hated man! You know, I guess they shot him five times, they...he was stabbed a bunch in a sword fight, and they beheaded him and hung his head on the bow of a ship! So it was very brutal. But at the same time, there's so much, you know, rumour and I feel like it's almost like a lot of falsifications of history, you don't quite know where the fictional tales lie and where the facts really are. And there's...and because I'm a big paranormal buff, there's tons of rumours about his ghost around the area.

HELEN

Oooh...

FAY

Yay!

JEREMY

Anywhere from there to Charleston, so. I don't know, to me that's just interesting, I like the fact that there's no hard-known facts and people are still researching and finding new information to this date.

HELEN

That is cool.

NEMO

Mm.

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FAY

That is, yeah.

JEREMY

But nasty guy...nasty guy.

FAY

Oh yeah!

JEREMY

I don't condone his activities!

(group laughter)

NEMO

Yeah, I feel like that's also part of what you said about the like...because you don't know where the like truth ends, and the fiction begins. I think that's also part of the like, why it's so easy to make them such a romantic figure as well, because it comes with that inherent like...who, like...how much of it was true, like how much do you think was true and like you can like really...yeah, foster so much and the kind of bloodiness of it as well makes it feel like taboo to like revel in it, I guess? I say as somebody who likes the kind of like...I guess not gore, but like the idea of, like, creative ways of killing someone – that sounds really wrong, but like...!

FAY

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Okay...

HELEN

No, I know what you mean. I know what you mean. There is a morbid curiosity...

NEMO

Yeah, yeah...

HELEN

In...it's why people watch the Saw movies isn't it?

NEMO

For sure, yeah...

JEREMY

Right.

HELEN

Because you're like, how many ways can a person die? Many! Very many ways!

NEMO

Yeah, yeah.

(laughter)

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HELEN

I think that's a very human impulse, I think we've been doing...I think that there's like been an interest in the morbid and the sort of, gross and disgusting and the painful for a really long time.

NEMO

Mm, mm.

HELEN

I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing at all.

FAY

I mean, you know that's why they're called operating theatres, right?

NEMO

Yeah, yeah, for sure.

HELEN

Yeah, because people used to watch!

FAY

Yeah. That's why they're built in that amphitheatre kind of way in the old ones. It's like, yeah.

JEREMY

Plus I write horror, so it's kind of my wheelhouse!

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(laughter)

I like to mix reality with fiction, and yeah, that's where my head's at all the time. I promise I'm a decent person outside of my fiction writing.

(group laughter)

HELEN

That's okay. As long as its fiction it's fine, the problem is if you try and do it to someone else in real life, but we are, there are no serial killers in this podcast, as well as no facts. Oh, that means, that means that that's not a fact either...whoops! Umm...

(laughter)

We'll be back after this break!

(laughter)

HELEN

And welcome back! So, I do realise that I didn't say who my favourite pirate was.

NEMO

Yeah!

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JEREMY

Enquiring minds want to know.

FAY

Mm.

HELEN

Yes! I mean, I assume that all the listeners want to know because obviously, all the listeners want to know what I think at all times.

NEMO

The best Rusty Quill member, yeah, as you said.

(Helen laughs)

HELEN

Well, what I have been trying to think about while you've been talking about all of your amazing pirates, is this book series called The Liveship Traders by Robin Hobb...

NEMO

Mmm.

HELEN

Which is not about pirates, but there are pirates in it!

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(laughter)

No, I guess in some ways it is about pirates! They are quite major...it's very hard to explain because it's a trilogy and it's a really complex plot, but some pirates steal this family's ancestral ship, and so the family fits out another ship to try and get it back, and then there's also a load of stuff going on with like civil war and slavery and family ties and...dragons...

(group laughter)

NEMO

Of course, of course, the standard things.

JEREMY

It's your show, if you want to let that count, you let it count!

(group laughter)

FAY

Yeah man...yeah that's, sure...

(group laughter)

HELEN

Well, the thing is, the thing is, one of the POV characters – Captain Kennit, so he's a pirate, and he is the most monstrous person in fiction I think I've ever come across.

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NEMO

Mmm...

HELEN

Just...horrible, horrible, does not care at all about anyone's feelings, but he does a really, really good job of making it seem like he does?

FAY

Ooh.

HELEN

Including accidentally. Like he will, he will say something that he means dismissively, but someone will take it in completely the opposite way that he meant it?

FAY

Oof.

HELEN

And like he does horrible, absolutely irredeemable stuff in this book...but he's a really, really interesting character. And spoilers for anyone who is reading this series of books. But part of the reason for why he's...why he can't connect with people in the same way turns out to be because he...oh God, how am I going to put this because now I have to explain the previous trilogy...

(laughter)

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Basically what happened is, he sort of got his empathy sucked out...

NEMO

Hmm...

FAY

Okay...

HELEN

And has never figured out how to relate to people without it. And it's actually a very, very sad story, because he's a heavily, heavily traumatised person.

JEREMY

Do you find it's easier to, you know, kind of feel remorse for people that are just horrible, they do horrible things when you find where they're...you know, maybe they didn't start out that way, but something caused them to be that way?

HELEN

I don't feel remorse or anything. I feel bad for the younger him that didn't deserve all these horrible things that happened to him.

JEREMY

Right.

HELEN

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But he still made a series of increasingly terrible choices, like...

FAY

That's the thing, isn't it? He chose to do that.

JEREMY

Yep. He's still in charge.

FAY

Look at all the other people who've had terrible...terrible things happen to them and they don't do that, so...

HELEN

There are plenty of traumatised people who are still wonderful people.

FAY

Yeah. Exactly.

HELEN

But I think he...just because he's, I think he's one of, sort of, there's...it's very rare that you get a kind of villainous character like that, and you see so deeply into their psyche, I guess? And so for me, he's one of my favourite pirate characters.

NEMO

Yeah, and I think you can revel a bit in it as well, when like...even...like not in a like redeeming way, but in a like, it's interesting, it's fascinating to see his...to

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see an irredeemable character's psyche, because I think that writers don't go into that because they feel like they have to redeem someone if they're going to like, go that deep into someone. And if they're like you know, thinking about a villain, either you make them like 'Ha ha ha, I'm evil evil' or like 'Ha ha ha, I'm evil but actually I'm going to become good at the end'. You don't get to see so much of the like, yeah, really fascinating, like 'I'm evil of my own volition, even despite my past' and I think that's a good pirate thing as well? Where like, they know that they're not doing good things, but they're still really good characters?

FAY

Well, this is something I love about fanfic, is that, you know, fanfiction writers will take a villain and go 'right! Let's really step into how many choices they made and kept doing that and kept on that path, even though they could see what it was', how they got there and stayed there. That, I love that, I love that kind of deconstruction stuff, but then I could probably do a whole one of these about fanfiction anyway, so...

(laughter)

HELEN

We're probably not going to do a fanfiction one I'm afraid.

(laughter)

FAY

Dammit!

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HELEN

I know, I would love to! Maybe we can just have a conversation that isn't recorded for hashtag content about fanfic...is that...Lowri, wagging her finger!

FAY

Yeah, I hear people do that...

HELEN

None of that!

NEMO

Fay, you and I can make an Enthusigasm pirated version where we talk about fanfiction!

(laughter)

FAY

Yes.

NEMO

We are going call it, Enthusi...oh, I can't make puns on the fly...erm, Happygasm...oh no, that's worse...

(group laughter)

FAY

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Infogasm? Oh, I don't know, anyway, yes, hi...

HELEN

The other interesting thing also about Captain Kennit as a character is, um, you also see him through other people's eyes...the people who hate him and also the people who love him? Like his crew and his girlfriend, and this young boy that he sort of takes under his wing and starts to see him as a father figure. And his ship, which happens to be alive. I didn't mention the ships were alive.

NEMO

Oh yeah, the dragons, the anthropomorphic ship...yayyy.

HELEN

So, it's interesting seeing also, people's views of him who, like the disconnect between who they think he is and who he is internally is all...anyway, yeah, that's my favourite pirate character. I was also debating Captain Hook, but that would just be purely based on the gifs I've seen of Jason Isaacs playing Captain Hook.

(laughter)

With that in mind, I did have another question that sort of, I hope is segueing nicely along, which is um...do we have like a favourite pirate media? I mean, we've got Peter Pan, we've got Pirates of the Caribbean, we've got Black Sails, we've got Treasure Island...I can't think of any other pirate media.

NEMO

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Sinbad.

(laughter)

JEREMY

Oh no...

FAY

Oh, Sinbad!

HELEN

Sinbad!

NEMO

I forgot like, I was in the break remembering...I was trying to think like what was the first pirate that I ever loved, and I was like, oh, it was Sinbad. Like absolutely, it was Sinbad.

(laughs)

FAY

I think I'm probably the same, yeah.

HELEN

I actually, I never saw Sinbad, but I always wanted it. There was, I had a VHS of Aladdin, I think? And there was an advert for Sinbad, and I was like, 'oh yeah, I should watch that!' And I never got round to it.

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NEMO

I think you should. I watched it recently and it holds up fairly well.

HELEN

Hmm...

FAY

We're talking the recent one, rather than the Harryhausen one, right?

HELEN

I don't know! It was on a Disney VHS, it could be anything.

FAY

(laughter)

True, yeah. Because the mouse owns a lot, let's face it!

HELEN

What do you think, Jeremy?

JEREMY

Well, I'm going to echo your Captain Hook interest there. Because, I mean, well first of all, there's so many different ways that Captain Hook is portrayed. In the book Peter Pan...have you read the book?

HELEN

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No!

FAY

Yes. That's the first version I read, actually, yeah.

JEREMY

Yeah.

HELEN

Really?

JEREMY

Much different than I... because I read it as an adult. I'd like to read it again, actually, because it's been, you know, several years. But it was so different, and then you look at like the cartoon version that I remember from childhood, and then you look at the Dustin Hoffman version, and you know, there's so many iterations of it. I think growing up I thought, you know, this guy is just like upset because he lost his hand! You know?

(laughter)

There's way more to it than that. I'm not trying to oversimplify it.

FAY

So many layers.

JEREMY

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But yeah, Captain Hook. I dig what you're saying there, I get where you're coming from.

(laughter)

HELEN

Can you tell me about how the book is different to the films, because I've never read the book. Is it...

FAY

Oh God...darker for a start.

JEREMY

Yeah.

HELEN

Oh really?

FAY

Oh God...any version you've seen of it, the book is darker and more complex, definitely.

JEREMY

I think I read it when I was maybe 20, 21, so...a long time ago. I just remember these like...these shadow-beings that were going around chasing Peter Pan, and like Peter Pan was kind of creepy. His character alone was really creepy. It was very much like something that I...you know, back then, I wasn't as into the

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horror stuff, but I wouldn't read it before bed, you know? It's just creepy...I don't know, it creeped me out, gives me the willies. Very few things do that, you know I can go ghost hunting and I can go watch most horror movies. There's a very few things that give me the creeps and that was just a book that was just...it unsettled me you know? Maybe not so much the Captain Hook character himself, but Peter Pan's character for sure! Yeah, it's very different. It's like if you read Alice in Wonderland and compare it to the Disney cartoon – very, very different.

HELEN

Oh yeah, Alice in Wonderland is really bizarre!

(laughs)

FAY

But for each of the characters, it goes into way more of the origin story, so you learn a bit more about James Hook's childhood and him growing up, and all the rest of that kind of stuff. And I was...it's a wee bit longer ago again that I read it – I was probably about 8 or 9, arguably a little too young to be reading that, but yeah. Yeah, I remember it did unsettle me and the character of Hook was, yeah, way more than he's always portrayed. I often feel... it's like a weird indignation whenever I see him pantomimed, you know? I just think, no, there's a lot more to him than that. Even though I still don't like him, you know, there's a lot more to him than that. And a lot more to Peter Pan, but yeah.

JEREMY

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I'd love to see a good realistic version of that book made, you know. Instead of like the buffoon, you know, he always plays the buffoon with his sidekick, really get into the characters and...I don't know, that would be interesting.

FAY

Hoffman added an interesting bit of darkness to it, he wasn't full buffoon.

JEREMY

Right.

FAY

They left that to Smee...but yeah...

HELEN

Yeah, Hoffman added just like 'oh, he's suicidal' to it.

FAY

Yeah, what the fuck was, that was, that was dark, yeah definitely.

HELEN

But it was played for comedy somehow!

(laughs)

NEMO

Oh my god.

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HELEN

But I will say, Hook is one of my favourite, like childhood films. Loved that film so much.

JEREMY

It was good.

FAY

Yeah, it was a good film.

HELEN

But it's so bizarre when you watch it as an adult. You're like, what, how did these decisions get made?

(laughs)

FAY

Oh, there's a weird little factoid if you're in for those. When they used to do the original stage play of Peter Pan, they would always have the man who played Mr Darling – like the father figure...

HELEN

Yeah.

FAY

...would always play Hook.

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NEMO

Yeah.

HELEN

Yes, they did that in the Jason Isaacs Peter Pan too.

FAY

There you go. So, that's a tradition, so they always doubled that up, and there, so, there's all sorts of stuff there about, you know, the darkness and sinisterness of angry father figures, and so, oh yeah, you can really get into all that if you wanted to.

HELEN

I think I should read the original Peter Pan, because I...

FAY

Yeah, I recommend it.

HELEN

I love stuff like that! Okay!

JEREMY

I want to re-read it. It's definitely worth it. It's a good read.

HELEN

One of the things that I quite liked wondering about, just because I haven't read the book, is like, I was like, what if Hook was a lost boy and he just like

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grew up and that's why Peter Pan hates him? What if they were friends, but now Peter Pan doesn't remember? He just hates him because.

FAY

Well, I mean, the pirates are lost, aren't they? They're all trapped in this same ever-living, not-growing-up thing themselves – the pirates don't get older.

NEMO

Mm.

HELEN

Oh, do they not?

FAY

No, they're as eternal as the boys. Never-Never Land is...

HELEN

Are they all dead?

FAY

Never-Never Land is a weird place, you know?

HELEN

(whispering) Are they dead...are they dead, Fay?

FAY

(whispering) I don't know...

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NEMO

It kind of sounds like the shadow, what they did with the shadow realm in Yu-Gi-Oh! Sorry to make this about anime!

(laughter)

FAY

No please, let's go sideways.

NEMO

That it was originally in the Japanese anime, it was, they died once they lost the card game...

HELEN

What?!

NEMO

...but when they, like, Americanised it, they couldn't, they were like, 'you can't kill them, it's a children's card game!' So they were like, yeah, they've gone to the shadow realm!

FAY

Oh wow...

HELEN

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Oh my god, I had no idea!

NEMO

Yeah!

(laughs)

HELEN

Terrifying! I would like to end the show with a quick fun question, which is: if you were a pirate, what would your pirate name be?

(laughter)

I really want mine to have been like alliterative, I want to be something like...I don't know, what begins with 'G' and is pirate-y?

FAY

Garr...

(group laughter)

No, you talk about gunnels or guns or anything like that...

HELEN

I mean, something like Gun-grabbin' Gould or something like that!

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NEMO

Mmm...

FAY

The fact that your name has 'Hel' in it, surely, you know, you could be like the Hell-bound Ghoul...I don't know, something like that!

(laughter)

HELEN

That's true! Hell's Bells, there we go!

(laughter)

JEREMY

That's a tough one.

HELEN

Helen 'Hell's Bells' Gould, the pirate.

(laughs)

JEREMY

I like it.

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HELEN

Any other takers?

JEREMY

I'd have to go something simple, like Short Beard, or...

(laughter)

I don't know, I'm horrible at coming up with things like that on the spot!

HELEN

I love that! Short Beard!

JEREMY

Short Beard is here! Arrrrrrrrrrrrr....

HELEN

Which implies Big Beard!

FAY

Erm, I've actually...someone called me this as a poet. Someone used to host me on various stages, so I'll probably just stick with this, because in different contexts it sounds far more sinister. But they used to bill me as The Welsh Whisperer.

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HELEN AND NEMO

Ooh...

FAY

And I'm like, yeah, that could sound super sinister if, you know, whispered in a dark tavern corner...you don't want to cross the Welsh Whisperer. Okay, so you know, I'm going to stick with that one, I guess.

HELEN

I love that!

JEREMY

It's mysterious, for sure.

FAY

Uh huh. It's mostly because sound engineers really hate dealing with my voice!

(laughter)

They'll have had like some punk act on before me, and they're like, frantically turning the sound up, but yeah. Okay.

HELEN

And Nemo, what about you?

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NEMO

I've been trying to think of a pun...because, so, Nemo means 'nobody' in Latin, so I've been trying to think of something to do with that, and I am just so bad with naming things!

HELEN

Awww.

FAY

I mean you could just be Captain Nemo, and there will be a...

NEMO

I could just be Captain Nemo, was the thing, yeah!

(laughter)

HELEN

And no one knows what you look like.

NEMO

Exactly! Yeah...

HELEN

Always got a big hood and a hat.

NEMO

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...and I get to be mysterious under the sea, and very beautiful...and he also hates mankind and collects Victor Hugo novels, so...that's basically me!

(laughter)

FAY

Nice!

HELEN

Wonderful. Alright, that's definitely all that we've got time for. This has been so much fun, I have laughed so much. Thank you so much for coming on the show everyone!

ALL

Thank you!

HELEN

And thank you, listener, for coming along with us! I hope that you have learned about pirates like I have, and enjoyed our...our chatter. And we'll see you on the next episode. But for now, it's goodbye from me - goodbye! And it's goodbye from all of them! Do you want to say goodbye everyone?

ALL

Goodbye!

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NEMO

Watch Black Sails!

(laughter)

HELEN

Watch Black Sails! Yarr!

ALL

Yarr!

(laughter)

[SHOW THEME OUTRO]

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