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Author/Interview subject: Guy Bass (GB)
Interviewed by: Janice Forsyth (JF)
Other speakers: Audience (Aud), Boy in Audience (Boy), Girl in Audience (Girl), Sophie (S), Jack (J)

JF: Hi there, I'm Janice Forsyth. A massive Authors Live welcome. So pleased to have your company wherever you are. Are you excited?

Aud: Yes.

JF: Yes, you are, and so are the people with me because I am not alone, we've got a splendid audience with us today in the studio, come from two Scottish primary schools, St Brigid's in North Ayrshire, and Raploch Primary in Stirling. Don't take my word for it, have a look at them, they're fantastic, and why don't you guys here give a wave? Wave, wave to the cameras. Aren't they lovely? You're making hundreds and thousands of new friends right across the UK, how cool is that? We haven't even blooming started yet. Now, as you can see, how excited are you guys?

Aud: So excited.

JF: Very excited, I am too, and that's because...well, you're not going to just stand and look at me all day, that would be dull. No, we've got a really brilliant author. We have a fantastic author with us today, Guy Bass, who is a writer, he's won awards for his books, which include Stitch Head, the Legend of Frog, Atomic, and many, many more. The other great thing about Guy is, well, he's had a great life so far because it's as if he's never grown up. When he was a child, he dreamed of being a superhero, and I think he still does, and he spends a lot of his time reading comics. Do you?

Aud: Yeah.

JF: Imagine just reading comics all the time, but also writing books too, he works extremely hard. He's going to be telling us...he's worked so hard, he's going to

be telling us about his childhood but also the main character in his new series, Spynosaur: A Secret Agent, which is half spy and half...

Aud: Dinosaur.

JF: Dinosaur, correct. You guys are so on the ball. Right, I know by the end of today, you're going to have tons of questions to ask so, during the event, while you're listening and watching Guy, if you've got a really cracking question and your school or classroom has a Twitter account, then get your question in and, at the end of the event, after Guy's finished doing his stuff, I'll try and ask him as many of your brilliant questions as possible. So what to do is use the hashtag #bbcauthorlive. Altogether now, hashtag...

Aud: #bbcauthorlive.

JF: ...#bbcauthorlive. You are just great. Okay, I'll be quiet now and introduce the main event. Give a massive Authors Live welcome, out there and here, to the spectacularly talented, Guy Bass.

Aud: [applause]

GB: Thanks very much, thanks. Thanks a lot, hello there, you alright?

Aud: Yeah.

GB: Yeah? You all having a good day?

Aud: Yeah.

GB: Yeah? You all having a good week?

Aud: Yeah.

GB: You all having a good month? You all having a good month?

Aud: Yeah.

GB: Good year?

Aud: Yes.

GB: Having a good life?

Aud: Yes.

GB: Good, mainly yeses, that's good. [laughs] Yeah, hello there, thanks for coming, thanks for coming out there as well. My name is Guy Bass and I write books, I

write books for you. I write books for you, madam, and for you, sir, and for you...not you, widdly, I don't know why. No, I do. But mainly, and I hope this makes sense, mainly I write books for me, and I think this is probably true of most people who write books for children. What they're really doing is they're kind of writing for their younger self, and that's what I try to do. I try to sort of reconnect with my inner child, with the child who sort of lives in the back of my brain.

So, when I first started writing children's books I had to go back in time through my own mind to meet younger versions of myself, but, full disclosure, that is not my true inner child. This is my true inner child. That needs no explanation, that's a photo of me as a small child, trying to put a bag on my head. Now, I would like to think if I saw a child trying to put a bag on their head, even if it wasn't my child, I'd say, don't do that, you might suffocate, I'll take that. I wouldn't take the time to find a camera and take a picture. My dad took that photo, unbelievable. But, in fairness, I was always doing stupid stuff when I was [laughs] that age, but that's because life made no sense.

Aud: [laughs]

GB: That is the problem, that is the problem with life, and I'm sure you'll agree. Life basically makes no sense. You know, when we get older, we try to make sense, we try to pretend that it makes sense but, actually, it doesn't. I promise you, it doesn't. One of the things...because when you start out, you know, we all start out the same way, basically, all human beings start out sort of like a potato with arms and legs, pretty much. You're a little overcooked potato with arms and legs and you just lie there and you're like, [makes baby noises]...

Aud: [laughs]

GB: ...and that's all you do. Like, for ages, that's all you do, [laughs] and every now and again some enormous giant runs towards you and goes [cooing noises]. [screams] What's the matter with you? [laughs]

Aud: [laughs]

GB: Or they'll bring you, like, a bottle of milk as big as your head, there you go [cries]...

Aud: [laughs]

GB: ...or some cuddly toy like a teddy bear that's three times your size. Sleep well, boom [panting noises].

Aud: [laughs]

GB: Food as well, food makes no sense, because when you're a little baby you see the grownups, the giants, making the food and it looks amazing. I'd be there as a little baby in the highchair watching my mum and dad make a nice...something with a ritual, like a nice Sunday roast. They'd make this Sunday roast, there'd be a huge chicken and there'd be loads of vegetables, all the different colours, and potatoes.

They'd smoosh it all up, it'd go in the oven and smells would come out, this thing was incredible. It came out, they chopped it all up, they put all the food out on the plate, they'd put all the plates out on the table, everybody came in, they covered everything in gravy, they sat down and they started eating. I'm in the back thinking, what about me?

Aud: [laughs]

GB: And then my mum turned to me, she turned to me and she said, don't worry, Guy, I've not forgotten about you, and she handed me a bowl of baby food. Lukewarm green goop, it's as far away from actual food as you can possibly get...

Aud: [laughs]

GB: ...and I'm there in the highchair [laughs] thinking, what's that?

Aud: [laughs]

GB: I ain't eating that. You have that, I'll have the chicken.

Aud: [laughs]

GB: So then my mum had to sort of coax me into eating the weird goop. She's like that, go on, eat the goooooop. I was trying to limbo out of it, nooooooo.

Aud: [laughs]

GB: Eat the goop, eat the goooooop. Nah, nah, nah. [laughs] Finally using the least appropriate metaphor in the world to eat the goop, here comes the train into the tunnel.

Aud: [laughs]

GB: Driving a train at me, that's not going to make me hungry. [laughs] It's just weird. One of the things that I did when I was this age, and I think I'm probably not alone here, I imagine some of you also went through this phase. One of the things that I did was I decided that everything I saw was mine. I used to just wander round,

[laughs] you know what I'm talking about, I used to wander round and just anything that took my fancy I'd just be like that, mine.

Aud: [laughs]

GB: Mine.

Aud: [laughs]

GB: Mine.

Aud: [laughs]

GB: [laughs] Just anything at all, and I'd just try and grab it all, and my mum would be sort of running after me, no, Guy, no. Mine, mine, mine.

Aud: [laughs]

GB: She'd go, no, Guy, I'm sorry, Guy, no. You can't have that, I'm sorry, no. Why?

Aud: [laughs]

GB: The most simple word in any language, the greatest word you will ever speak in your entire life, [laughs] why?

Aud: Why?

GB: My mum was like that, [laughs] well, you can't have it because you can't. Why?

Aud: [laughs]

GB: I had her on the ropes. Well, you can't have it because I say so. Why?

Aud: Why? [laughs]

GB: [laughs] And, at this point, my mum had two choices. Either she could explain to me why I couldn't have whatever it was that I wanted...well, the thing is, Guy, that there actually, that's an old family heirloom. It's old and it's very fragile, and if I gave it to you you'd break it. Why?

Aud: [laughs]

GB: Because you're useless. Ah. Which might be quite hurtful when you're that age. Or, she could do what she did, take the easy route and just lie. The thing is, Guy, do you know, I'd love to give you that, I really would, but that there is magic, and if I gave it to you, the minute you touched it your head would fall off.

Aud: [laughs]

GB: What? I know, I don't know why we keep it in the house. There you go, voom, [puffs and pants]. So, they're always lying. [laughs] So I've known from a really, really young age, I knew what I wanted to be when I was a grown-up. Hands up if you know what you want to be when you're a grown-up. Oh, quite a lot of you, okay, that's good. Alright, well, I knew from a really, really young age. I had two career plans in mind, basically. I was absolutely convinced that when I was a grown-up I was either going to be a superhero or a dinosaur, they were my two career plans [laughs] because I grew up reading comics.

Hands up if you like comics. You're my favourites, good. You like comics? Good, excellent. So I grew up reading comics, and one of the first comics that I ever read was all about this fellow. Does anybody recognise this guy? Hello, yeah?

Boy: Tarzan.

GB: Tarzan, yes, you're absolutely right. Tarzan, the lord of the jungle, the protector of the jungles of Africa. He was raised by apes from a little baby. They brought him up, they didn't eat him, [laughs] they brought him up and they raised him and he became the protector of Africa and he would fight against poachers and angry giraffes, I don't really know, and he'd swing on vines and do cool stuff. I remember reading this Tarzan comic and I was like that, awesome, I am Tarzan.

Aud: [laughs]

GB: I went out into the garden and I took off all of my clothes, except for my pants, because Tarzan basically just wears pants, it's very hot in Africa. Well, he actually wears a sort of animal skin loincloth, but I didn't have that, I just had my pants, and I would pretend to fight poachers and angry giraffes and swing on vines, and I did that for ages. Then, a little bit later, my mum bought me another comic all about this fellow. I know you know who this is.

Aud: Hulk.

GB: The Hulk, yes, the Incredible Hulk. A guy who, when he gets angry, he turns green and he grows really big and he's like, grr, Hulk smash, and I read this [laughs] Hulk comic and I was like, awesome. [laughs] I am the Hulk...

Aud: [laughs]

GB: ...and I went out into the garden and I took off all of my clothes, except for my pants, because the Hulk also pretty much just wore...he actually wears ripped

trousers, doesn't he? Yeah, because when the Hulk gets angry he grows really big, and so all of his clothes rip except, phew, for his trousers, which only rip down here at the bottom. Never here, at the bottom. Never in 30-something years of reading Hulk comics have I ever seen the Hulk's bum cheeks just, whoosh, whoa!

Aud: [laughs]

GB: Hulk sorry. [laughs] Super-awkward.

Aud: [laughs]

GB: Hulk just going to go over here and get some stretchier trousers from Big and Tall. [laughs]

Aud: [laughs]

GB: But I loved this Hulk comic, so I'd go into the garden, because that's what I really wanted to do, I really wanted to have ripped trousers, but my mum, unsurprisingly, wouldn't let me rip my trousers. She caught me with a pair of trousers in one hand and a pair of scissors in the other. [laughs] I was like that, what?

Aud: [laughs]

GB: Oh, I wasn't going to do anything. You are not cutting up your trousers, Guy Bass, wear your pants like you always do. [laughs] So I did, I was out in the garden in my pants and I was the Hulk, I was like that, grr, Hulk smash, grr, and I'd just be angry at everything. I'd just be angry at trees, trees, grr!

Aud: [laughs]

GB: Angry at [laughs] passing pigeons, pigeoooooons! Angry at my own dog, [barks], oh, sorry, sorry. [laughs]

Aud: [laughs]

GB: But then, thankfully, my parents [laughs] they saw how cold I was out in the garden in my pants and they took pity on me and they bought me my very own superhero costume, and this started something for me, the dream of being a superhero for my job. I have photographic evidence. Here we are, here's me [laughs] as Superman. That was during my very positive phase as a superhero, I also went through a dark and brooding phase. [laughs]

Aud: [laughs]

GB: Yes, exactly. You guys, you don't know how lucky you are with your modern superhero costumes where they have the muscles already built into the suits and you can just rock up to the fancy dress party and be like, ladies.

Aud: [laughs]

GB: Yeah, what is it? Oh, I went to the gym for 20 minutes and I was like, pow-pow-pow, I know. Then, within ten minutes [laughs] I'm like, I'm so hot, please can I take it off? That was like a Batman bin liner, with this enormous mask, I'm Batman. [laughs]

Aud: [laughs]

GB: But my greatest achievement was...I had another costume, a costume of the greatest superhero in the world. Who can tell me, who is the greatest superhero in the world, does anybody know? Yes, at the back, who's the greatest superhero?

Girl: This one might sound crazy, but it's Captain Underpants.

GB: Captain Underpants? Has anyone got a proper answer?

Aud: [laughs]

GB: It's a good book though. Hello?

Girl: Ironman.

GB: Ironman? Okay, look, if you don't want to play properly, we can just stop, that's the thing. [laughs] There's only one right answer. Yes, hello?

Boy: Captain America.

GB: Captain America, you're not even American, what are you talking...this is madness.

Boy: Spynosaur.

GB: Good, Spynosaur, you're nearly there. Yeah, one more?

Girl: Superman?

GB: Super...now, look. I'll let you into a clue. [noise of shooting spider web] All at once?

Aud: Spiderman.

GB: Spiderman, the greatest superhero ever. My greatest achievement in life to date is that there is no photo of me as Spiderman. [laughs] That's because I made sure that nobody saw me change from my normal clothes into my Spiderman costume, which I insisted on wearing underneath my normal clothes. I was very hot [laughs] but I loved this Spiderman costume.

Again, it was just pretty much pyjamas and a mask, but I used to pretend that I was Spiderman, and obviously he has quite specific powers so he can crawl up walls. This is quite hard to do, so I decided to use my imagination. I decided to pretend that the floor was the wall. I spent an entire summer holiday just crawling around the house [laughs] in my Spiderman costume like this, I'm Piderman, I'm Piderman [laughs]...

Aud: [laughs]

GB: ...just completely giddy, and my mum would be like, Guy, what are you doing? You cannot spend an entire summer crawling up and down the house like a mad thing. Get up, Guy, get up. I'd be like that, I am not Guy, I am Spiderman...

Aud: [laughs]

GB: ...and this is not a floor, this is a wall. I'm climbing up a wall.

Aud: [laughs]

GB: How are you even standing there...

Aud: [laughs]

GB: ...you should be like [screams] [makes splat noise]. You're ruining it, get out of the way. [laughs] I worry about you, Guy, sometimes, I really do. Anyway, you've got to get up, you've got to come and have your tea. Come and have your tea, Guy. Spiderman does not have tea.

Aud: [laughs]

GB: Spiderman fights crime, crawls on walls, does some swinging and stuff...

Aud: [laughs]

GB: ...on webs, and that's it, that's all he does. I can't believe you're saying, come and have tea, and ruining it and making it out to be...what are we having? Pizza. Yeah, okay, yeah. [laughs]

Aud: [laughs]

GB: That was the end of my superhero career. Spiderman or pizza? Pizza.

Aud: [laughs]

GB: Yeah, so [laughs] it was either superhero or dinosaur. Now, when I was in training to be a dinosaur for my job, in my mind's eye I looked very much like this, but in fact I looked like this. [laughs] So...

Aud: [laughs]

GB: ...ignore this pink blob here, that's my brother. He's not really making the effort, but I am clearly a dinosaur. Look at that, I've got the little jaw thing, I'm doing the claw hands and, arrrgh! I just used to wander around for ages pretending to be a dinosaur, training to be a dinosaur for my job, and nobody told me...that was the problem, nobody told me that you can't be a dinosaur for a job. I was like, mum, when I grow up I'm going to be a dinosaur for my job. That's lovely, Guy, yes, carry on. Brilliant.

I was 25 before I realised you can't be a dinosaur for a job, it's unbelievable. [laughs] So I'd wanted to write a book about dinosaurs for a while and I'd already written some books about superheroes. My original idea was to combine my love of superheroes with my love of dinosaurs, but there was a problem because, the thing is, superheroes and dinosaurs are both very conspicuous. Do you know what I mean by conspicuous?

Aud: No.

GB: They're quite sort of obvious. They're sort of big and they're loud and they're showy. What I really like to do when I write is I like to have a sort of contradiction, I like to have two things that sort of oppose each other when I start writing. So I was thinking, well, what if you had a dinosaur character who was meant to be really inconspicuous. You know, they were meant to sort of blend in, but obviously all the time they looked like a dinosaur. I remembered the old Bugs Bunny cartoons...does anybody remember Bugs Bunny?

Does anyone know Bugs Bunny? Oh, a few of you, he's still alive. Yeah, the Bugs Bunny cartoons I used to watch, and Bugs Bunny was sort of...he'd put on a dress and he'd fool Elmer Fudd into thinking that he wasn't a rabbit at all, he was a sort of glamorous lady, and that's really how that started. So this is Spynosaur, and Spynosaur is the world's first and, let's face it, only, secret agent dinosaur. He started out life as a human spy called Agent Gambit but he found himself tied to a space rocket by his arch-enemy and fired into the moon.

So, while his body was lost, his brainwaves were saved, and through the power of spyence - spy-science, it's real – he had his brainwaves transferred into the body of a newly-grown dinosaur, and thus Spynosaur was born. Spynosaur works for Department 6, which is a secret agency working to keep the world safe from harm, but he doesn't do it alone. Spynosaur is aided in his mission by his auburn-haired sidekick and daughter, Amber, and Spynosaur teaches Amber everything that she needs to know about how to be a secret agent.

As you can imagine, Spynosaur is incredibly strong, cunning, wily, intelligent, swift, and he's also a master of disguise. See if you can spot the disguised Spynosaur in this next slide. Anyone? Anyone at all? No, no one? What? Yeah, it's that little fellow in the corner there, look. No, it's not, he always looks like a dinosaur. [laughs] So, Spynosaur is given his orders by the rest of Department 6.

So we have Spynosaur and Amber in the middle there, we have the Head of Department 6, M11. She runs the show and likes nothing more than barking orders at Spynosaur and combing her moustache of seniority. Then we have Dr Newfangle, who creates all of the gadgets that Spynosaur uses on his missions, and then finally down there in the corner, that little chap down there is called Danger Monkey, and Danger Monkey also started out life as a human spy, but when he met a sorry end he had his brainwaves put into the body of a monkey instead of a dinosaur, and he's not very happy about it.

Unfortunately, when Danger Monkey isn't happy, he tends to do what monkeys do, fling his poo. It's true. So I'm going to read a bit now, this is from the first book in the series, aptly titled Spynosaur, and at this point in the story Spynosaur and the rest of Department 6, are on the hunt for Spynosaur's arch-enemy. He has a lot of enemies, as you can see, but we are most concerned today with this fellow. Exhibit A, Ergo Ego, Spynosaur's arch-enemy, the man responsible for firing him into the moon.

Ergo Ego has developed a super-secret weapon, a mysterious device known as the McGuffin. Nobody knows what the McGuffin is, they just know it's bad news. Danger Monkey has been tracking Ego but he's disappeared, and so Spynosaur and Amber are sent to find Danger Monkey, capture Ergo Ego, and secure the McGuffin. But, when they get to Ego's secret lair, there's no McGuffin, no Ego, and no Danger Monkey, all they find is a silver attaché case.

So Spynosaur takes the attaché case back to Department 6. M11 is convinced that inside the case is the super-secret weapon, the McGuffin, and they should

lock it away forever, but Spynosaur's curiosity gets the better of him. So, with his mighty jaws, he tears the lock off the case, and this is what happens next.

A moment after Spynosaur tore the lock off the case with his teeth, the case sprang open and out leapt a screaming monkey dressed in a spy suit, couldn't afford the spy suit. Danger Monkey, blurted Spynosaur, as the monkey latched onto his face and began pummeling it with his tiny fists. Help me up, will you, screamed the monkey madly, or I'll knock your teeth into next door's garden. I'll slap your socks inside out, I'll judo-toss your legs over your neck. With a shake of his great head, Spynosaur flung Danger Monkey across the room.

The monkey bounced along the ground before leaping to its feet again. I'll play xylophone on your funny bone, I'll chew on your fatty bits, I'll stub your toe, Danger Monkey cried, then he reached his hand behind his back. I'll, I'll, I'll...um, began Amber, is he about to do what I think he's about to do. [blows raspberry] He's got a whole handful, shrieked Dr Newfangle, and he's not afraid to use it. Duck and cover, M11 barked.

Danger Monkey, stop, Spynosaur cried, you may have had your brainwaves transferred into the body of a spider monkey following an unfortunate incident with a punctured parachute and a pool of piranhas, but that doesn't mean you should give in to animal instincts. Spyno? Spyno, my old china, Danger Monkey cried, pausing mid poo-toss. Sorry about losing my cool back there, [laughs] I thought you was Ergo Ego. That pain in the tail locked me up in that case, he caught me mid-spy, tempted me inside the case with a nice, juicy banana.

Why would Ego lock you in a case, asked Amber. The monkey squared up to her. You calling me a liar, trying to make a monkey out of me, he growled, brandishing his handful of excrement. I'll dip my tail in chilli sauce and stick it in your ear. Enough. Report, Danger Monkey, what happened? Stinking fruit must have been drugged, explained Danger Monkey, because the next thing I know, I'm waking up in the dark. Curse me uncontrollable craving for bananas. He glared at Dr Newfangle, I suppose that's what comes with having your brainwaves put into the body of a monkey instead of a dinosaur.

For the last time, Danger Monkey, I had no choice, insisted Newfangle. It's not easy growing a dinosaur, even with the almost limitless power of my science ray, not to mention trying to retro-engineer Ergo Ego's brainbox technology. But, rest assured, just because you are not a dinosaur, does not make you any less extraordinary. Allow me to explain in the best way I know. Oh, not this again, Newfangle, growled M11, we don't have time for...Newfangle pressed a button

on the wall and it slid aside to reveal a brightly-lit stage complete with a microphone stand and backing dancers in white coats.

Newfangle hopped onto the stage and so began Dr Newfangle's super spyence rap. Science, science, make way for spyence. Here comes the news to throw the doubters into silence. Made a dinosaur with my super science rays, add a slice of spy with the help of brainy-waves. Zap, zap, I just made your day, blazing a new trail with the trace of DNA. I'm Evolutin' man - got a super spyence plan, made a dinosaur spy, he's so fly, check the Spynosaur, he's the man.

Blast it to smithereens, are you quite finished, doctor, snapped M11. So you see, Danger Monkey, spyence made you super-special, added Newfangle, dropping the mic and hopping down from the stage. Special, what are you talking about? That was just about how awesome dinosaurs are, monkeys don't even get a mention, screeched Danger Monkey, holding his fistful of foulness aloft. I've got a good mind to fling this right in your...um, I don't mean to interrupt, Amber interrupted, but is your poo flashing?

Everyone's eyes darted to Danger Monkey's hand. Sure enough, the handful of excrement was blinking with a faint red light. Well spotted, poppet, said Spynosaur. He cautiously reached a claw into the poo and pulled out a small piece of plastic, illuminated at one end by a flashing light. Who put that in there, growled Danger Monkey. Nobody messes with my mess. It's a data drive, hidden inside that drugged banana you ate, no doubt, said Spynosaur, carrying it at arm's length over to a bank of computers. He plugged it in.

An image appeared simultaneously on every screen in the room. Ergo Ego, cried Amber. The egg-shaped head of their arch-enemy loomed large on the screens. Is this recording, Ego began, I can never work these things out. Do I have to press something? You would think an evil genius would fathom out how to...wait, wait, I think I've got it, okay, okay. Ego sat back in his chair and cleared his throat.

Greetings, dummies of Department 6. So, I bet you totally thought the McGuffin was in the attaché case, didn't you? [laughs] I bet you were all like, hey, we totally found the super-secret weapon. I can't believe Ego just left it in there, what a stupid head. [laughs] But, no, it is your heads that are stupid. What are you saying about my head, growled Danger Monkey. I'll boil wash your underpants and give you a wedgie. I'll break out my watercolours and paint an unflattering portrait of you.

Quiet, insisted M11. Ego might be about to needlessly explain his next move. But, since you are so keen to find the real super-secret weapon, I've arranged a demonstration of its power. Tonight, the world will witness the McGuffin in all its glory and you won't even know until it's too late. You stupid heads. The screen went black. What are we going to do, said Amber, they could be anywhere in the world, how do we know where he's going to... Venice, Italy, said Spynosaur. That's where Ego plans to unleash his weapon. How do you work that out, said Danger Monkey.

It's very simple, from the tone of his voice, Ego's mouth was numb from cold. A clear sign that he's been eating ice cream, explained Spynosaur. Ice cream goes well with cheesecake. Cheesecake contains no cheese. No cheese sounds like nochas, which is night in Spanish. In Spain, the rain falls mainly on the plain. Plain crisps are merely salted. Salt is accompanied by its less popular counterpart, pepper. Pepper makes you sneeze. The longest sneezing spree lasted 978 days, and 978 is the favourite number of the King of Italy, who's hosting a masquerade ball at his grand palace tonight, a perfectly public place for Ego to unleash his weapon.

Wait, what, said Amber. You're right, poppet, it's almost too obvious. I barely had to use my spy skills at all, added Spynosaur, it's as if Ego wanted us to know his plans, but why? There's no time to question the whys and wherefores, interrupted M11, Ergo Ego is going to unleash his McGuffin, Spynosaur, what are you going to do about it? Spynosaur raised a scaly eyebrow. Save the day of course, he said. Now, somebody get me a cocktail dress. That's it, thank you very much.

JF: A huge round of applause for Guy Bass, please.

[applause]

JF: I think Guy needs a little sit down after that incredibly...

GB: [laughs]

JF: ...energetic performance. That was hilarious.

GB: [laughs]

JF: Have you always been this funny? Yeah. [laughs]

GB: No, just here, just here.

JF: Wasn't that great? I think another round of applause, go on.

Aud: [applause]

GB: Thank you, thanks a lot, thanks.

JF: We know that lots of questions have been coming in on Twitter using the hashtag #bbcauthorlive, so thank you very much for those, I'll ask Guy some of them in a moment, but first of all we have a couple of questions from our audience here.

GB: Great.

JF: So we're going to go to Sophie. Hi there, Sophie, tell us your question.

S: What's your favourite genre of writing and why?

GB: What's my favourite genre? You know, what I tend to do is I'll work in a particular genre and then by the time I've sort of finished writing that, I'm kind of thinking about another genre, so I really like to hop genres and put a little twist on it. I was writing a series called Stitch Head, which was a sort of gothic comedy horror, and then when I finished writing that I wanted to write something completely different, so that's why I started writing a sort of spy spoof.

JF: Very good question, thank you Sophie from Raploch, and now we've got...hello, who've we got here? Jack?

J: Yeah.

JF: Jack from St Bridget's Primary School. So what is your question for Guy?

J: Are you writing a book that includes Stitch Head and Spynosaur and, if you're not, would it be a good idea?

GB: A book that includes both Stitch Head and Spynosaur?

JF: Ooh, that's mixing up your genres.

GB: Ooh, yes, that would be an amazing mash-up of genres. I do like the idea of sort of mashing-up, I wrote a series called The Legend of Frog which was quite a deliberate mash-up of fantasy and science fiction. I don't know, I feel like Stitch Head, because he's quite small and shy, I feel like he'd probably get lost if he was hanging about with Spynosaur. Spynosaur would probably just put him in the attaché case and leave him there, [laughs] so I don't know. No plans so far but now you've got me thinking.

JF: Yeah, that is...so did you think of that, Jack, because you think yourself that that might be a good idea?

J: Yeah.

JF: Yeah, excellent. Great stuff, thank you very much indeed. You see, a world of the imagination from Guy, and lots of imagination going on here too. Right, let me tell you some questions that have come in ahead of time, and then I'll do some that have come in while you've been entertaining us, Guy. This is from the P5 class, James Aiton Primary in Cambuslang.

GB: Hello.

JF: Hello there, thank you for watching. Is there any special place that you have, or routine that you follow, when you're writing a book?

GB: So, I...well, I have a study at home, so I mainly write at home, but the wonderful thing about writing is that you can write anywhere. I generally write on trains, basically, yeah, anywhere that you have a pen and either a notebook or your arm...

JF: [laughs]

GB: ...pretty much write anywhere. What's the second part of the question?

JF: The second part of the question was, routine.

GB: Oh, routine. Well, I work really well in the mornings and really well in the evenings, and then I have this weird sort of smushy period in the middle where I just have to bang my head against the desk and go, nothing's working. But, yes, so, mornings and...

JF: And can inspiration strike at any time, you know, if you're walking down the road or having your lunch?

GB: Absolutely, and, yeah, sometimes at the weirdest times, yeah.

JF: [laughs]

GB: If I'm stuck for ideas, I just go to the loo, and I always have an idea on the loo, it's brilliant. [laughs]

JF: [laughs] Excellent, there you go. Well, we all go to the loo so, there you go, inspiration can strike us all, so to speak. This is from Robin, hi Robin...

GB: Hi Robin.

JF: ...in Letham Primary School in Perth. This is a tricky one. How do you make your books funny and the characters interesting? Phew, big question.

GB: [laughs] How do you mean...that's a big question.

JF: It is a big question.

GB: Well, I write stuff that I think is funny myself, and then I just have to hope that somebody else also finds it funny. I really don't think you can do anything more than that. I think you sort of try to be funny, if you try to appeal in a way to as many people as possible you end up diluting what you think is funny. So I basically just...

JF: Just do it.

GB: ...write what I think's funny and then I cross my fingers. [laughs]

JF: Yeah, you don't think about it too much. But, I mean, Guy's really funny in person, isn't he? I mean, not all authors...he's like watching stand-up comedy. So have you done any of that stuff, because obviously you're good at performing?

GB: Oh, crumbs, no.

JF: No?

GB: No, but, look, these guys are all lovely...

JF: [laughs]

GB: ...and well-behaved and they're surrounded by their teachers so they can't throw things at me. [laughs]

JF: [laughs]

GB: I think real comedy I'd just be terrified about people throwing things, that would be the worst. [laughs]

JF: They wouldn't throw anything. Right, here we go, this is a brilliant one from Echt Primary School in Aberdeenshire, from Leo. Hi, Echt Primary School, hello Leo.

GB: Hi Leo.

JF: What tips would you give someone who is just starting to write stories? Any top tips?

GB: Well, two things really. One is if you have an idea, write it down, write it down straight away, even if it's just two words or a little doodle or just a sketch,

anything, because if you don't write it down it will leave your head because you'll think about sandwiches and...

JF: [laughs]

GB: ...it'll go, [makes popping sound] oh no! Also, if you write it down you make it valid, and that's really important. The other thing I would say is write about what you love. If you have a genuine passion about belly button fluff...

JF: Anyone? [laughs]

GB: Anyone? [laughs] No, if you have a genuine passion about it, that passion will come out and that will then be interesting. If you don't, if you...conversely, if you hate spy dinosaurs but you think that it'll be a hit, you know, no one's going to like that.

JF: Well, that's great because it's the most unusual combination, isn't it, a spy and a dinosaur? I was thinking, how the heck did this come to you, and you've just explained...

GB: [laughs] Yeah.

JF: ...when you were showing us the slides of you as a kid that those were the things you were really interested in...

GB: My big dream, yeah.

JF: ...because otherwise, how would you ever combine those two? Thank you, Leo, for your question, and I think we all probably can guess the answer, or maybe it's not so obvious. This is from Sophie, P5/4, Woodlands Primary School in Renfrewshire. Guy Bass, is it fun being an author? [laughs]

GB: [laughs] Yes, especially today, this is when it's super-fun, yeah. No, it is, it's really fun. I mean, the idea that you can have an idea and then write something down and then not only would that potentially become a book, but it'll be a book that anyone wants to read, that's so humbling and lovely. Yeah, it's really nice. It's a bit lonely sometimes, that's the only trouble with writing, because you're stuck in a room on your own, but generally I have an absolute whale of a time, yeah.

JF: We're glad you're out of the room on your own and you've joined us.

GB: Yeah, yeah.

- JF: Here's an unusual one from Florence in Ferryhill Primary in Edinburgh. Hiya, Florence.
- GB: Hi, Florence.
- JF: Do you have a motto and, if yes, what is it?
- GB: Do I have a motto? I've got quite a few mottos, yeah.
- JF: Oh, good.
- GB: Never brush your teeth with a toothbrush that you've found on the street.
- JF: Good one, good advice.
- GB: Never drink purple drinks. Never wear shoes on a Thursday, I've already broken that one.
- JF: [laughs]
- GB: Yeah, they go on and on. [laughs]
- JF: Brilliant. What is your favourite book? This is from Emily and Cara in Bargarran Primary. Your favourite book and favourite author?
- GB: That's very easy for me because, as I said, I used to read loads of comics, and I didn't read loads of books when I was really little, and then I found...I have this, in fact. I found a book, this actual copy of this actual book by a little-known author called Roald Dahl. You won't have heard of him.
- JF: Anyone heard of Roald Dahl? Yeah, of course.
- GB: What? Okay, yeah, [laughs] he doesn't need a plug but, yeah, this book changed my life, genuinely changed my life. It's George's Marvellous Medicine, and I found this book and something change in my brain and I suddenly understood what all the fuss was about with books. So, I mean, I owe him my career. I think a lot of my generation probably do as well, but I read this book to death. Look, I killed it with love, [laughs] it just fell apart.
- JF: Ah, that's wonderful. It's still alive.
- GB: Yeah.
- JF: Well, that's brilliant and, actually, I can't believe it. We've run out of time, how is that possible? But that's a great question to end on because, as well as just

writing down your ideas, I think what we hear from you and other people is read as much as possible too.

GB: My goodness, yeah, yeah.

JF: Thank you very much indeed, we have run out of time. If you'd like to watch this again or tell your friends about it, it will be available online. So you go to scottishbooktrust.com/authorslive, look out for that coming soon and, indeed, you can watch all the other broadcast we've done. It's a massive online library now of brilliant, brilliant authors. We'll be back soon with more Authors Live, hope to see you then, but we've got to end with the biggest round of applause and cheering ever from all of you for the fantastic Guy Bass, ladies and gentlemen.

Aud: [applause and cheering]

GB: Thank you, cheers. Ta, thank you.