

Date:

Author/Interview subject: Robin and Lorenzo Etherington (RE) and (LE)

Interviewed by:

Other speakers: Audience (Aud), Boy in audience (Boy 1), Girl in audience (Girl #), Lady in audience (Lady #).

RE: Good afternoon everyone. We are the Etherington Brothers. My name is Robin. This is my brother Lorenzo, and we create comic books for a living. This is our job. It's what we do every single day. When we wake up in the morning, over a nice bowl of cereal – mm, mm, mm – we're thinking about comic books. Every lunch time, over a dream cheese sandwich – mm, mm, mm – we're thinking about comic books. At night we go to sleep in a house shaped like a comic book with a huge pile of comics under our pillow, and we have comic book dreams.

We love making comic books; this is what we do all the time. But when you guys grow up – and I can see that some of you already have grown up – you can do anything you want; any job you want, chase any dream you want, and we recommend you do that; chase every single one. Because we tried loads of different things, but we found that there was one thing we loved doing more than anything else in the world, and that was telling stories using pictures and words.

Now, this is very important today, because we do two very different things. I do all of the words, I create all the stories on the page, and my brother Lorenzo, he creates all of the images; everything that you are going to see today, like big things like that; he draws everything. He draws absolutely everything. And so we're going to talk about these two different areas today, and how they come together, because that's where we find the most fun, is when we join these two things together. But if you like writing, we'll talk about that; if you like art, we're going to get into all that sort of stuff as well. And we're going to talk to you a bit about our work; but this is much more of a show where we give you as many tips and tricks to make your own work amazing as we possibly can. It's much more about us giving you all of the knowledge that we've gathered and collected over the years, and helping your work get even more awesome.

So before we get into the show – and we have a lot to talk about today – we need to see if we’ve got the right people with us, here in the room. So adults and semi-responsible adults included, hands up if you’ve ever read a comic book or a graphic novel or a Manga in your life ever – hands up!

LE: Guilty!

RE: Guilty! Good. If your hand stays down – and there are a few parents’ hands stayed down – you’ve had an unfortunate life! And we’ll see if we can correct that in the next hour. Okay, that’s a good start, but shall we keep it going, shall we see?

LE: Yeah.

RE: Okay, right, let’s see if we’re still talking to the right people. Hands up if you’ve ever heard of *Transformers*: duh, duh, duh. We’ve created *Transformers* comics. Hands up if you’ve ever heard of *Star Wars*: zh, zh, zh. We’ve created *Star Wars* comics. Keep your hand up if you’ve ever heard of *Madagascar*, *Kung Fu Panda*, *Monsters versus Aliens*, *Wallace and Gromit*. Double hands up and double feet up; try not to kick the head off the person in front of you if you’ve heard of *Angry Birds*! And relax!

We have created comic books for all of these ideas, all of these characters, all of these worlds, which is great fun. It’s great fun. But there’s one important thing that links everything I’ve just said, and that is, we did not invent them. We didn’t invent the *Star Wars* universe; we didn’t make up light sabres. We didn’t invent *Wallace and Gromit*, we didn’t create them out of Plasticene; we just took those characters, and we told brand new stories with them, which is great fun. It’s great fun when you’re practising drawing and writing, to look at things you really love and try and copy them and learn how they did it. And that will help you make your own amazing stuff.

But the best thing about creating, the thing that we enjoy personally the most, is making up our own stories. And we’re going to talk a bit today, and we’re going to talk a bit about *Monkey Nuts* and *Baggage*, which are two of the graphic novels where we made up the whole world, all the characters, all of the stories. But as I said, this is about giving you guys all of our ideas. Basically, we’re going to give you everything that we’ve learnt for free, and then you can become more famous than us.

LE: [laugh].

RE: Pretty good deal, yeah? I think it sounds like a great deal. So let's get straight into it; let's not mess around; let's see what we're going to actually look at today. Well, our Big Adventure Show is going to look at a few story-starting areas. We're going to look at these six to get us in there: we're going to look at genre; we're going to look at worlds; we're going to look at character; stuff...

LE: [laugh].

RE: ...don't know what that's going to be – obstacles, and choices. Okay? But don't worry if you don't know what all these things mean yet. As we get to each one, we'll get in there. But let's start, possibly a little bit obviously, at the beginning, with genre. Let's have a little look at genre.

LE: Okay, so hands up who can tell me what the word 'genre' means? Okay, who has ever heard the word...hands up if you've heard the word before, first of all; let's try with that. Who has heard the word 'genre'?

RE: Okay.

LE: Quite a few of you; okay. Anybody think they can tell me what genre means? Okay. Anybody think they can tell me what it means?

Boy #: Is it a type of, like, it's like a type of subject.

LE: A type of subject; yeah, a type of story. A genre is a type of story. And the great thing about genres is, they are really useful for us when we want to, kind of, know what we can expect from a story or a video game or a movie, because by picking the genre, we sort of know a little bit about what we're going to get from it. So If we were reading a horror story or we were playing a horror video game or reading a horror comic book, we'd have an idea of the sort of things we'd get in that, because we know a little bit about the genre. And lots of writers and lots of artists like to pick their favourite genre to work in, just as we, as readers, like to read our favourite genres, because it's got elements that inspire us.

Okay? But genres – there's something amazing you can do with genres, and to give you an example of how that works from something you might have already done, I'd like to ask who here loves the delicious treat that is breakfast cereals. Who likes to eat breakfast cereals? Anybody?

Boy #: Yeah.

LE: Okay, good. My favourite, favourite food. And you might think, what have breakfast cereals got to do with genre? Well, they are very, very similar in many ways. If I asked you guys to put your hands up and tell me your favourite

breakfast cereal, you'd all have different answers for which were your favourites, and breakfast cereals are like genres, because we know a little bit about what we're going to expect from them. If it's a breakfast cereal that's got loads of chocolate and sugar in it, we know that it's probably going to be (a) delicious...

RE: [laugh].

LE: ...and (b) we won't have many teeth left after we've finished eating it. If it's something that's maybe a little bit more healthy and a little bit better for us, then we know that we'll get those benefits, but we might be on the toilet more than usual.

RE: [laugh].

LE: So these different breakfast cereals all give us different kinds of things. Now, that's quite obvious; breakfast cereal genres have each got their own characteristics; but this amazing thing we can do; hands up who has ever mixed two breakfast cereals together.

Good! Both hands up. Good. Keep your hands up if you've ever mixed three together.

RE: Three breakfast cereals?

LE: Anybody done four? Okay; there are still hands staying up.

RE: Some people...

LE: Sometimes it's just taking a multi-pack and going crrk, whew. That's good, that's good; that's what we do. So mixing breakfast cereals together is great for the key reason that now you've got a bowl of food in front of you, and you don't know what you're going to get in every mouthful. Every mouthful is different; it's got a little bit of this, a little bit of that; it's slightly surprising and it's way more interesting than the breakfast cereals alone. Well, funnily enough, we can do something quite similar with genre.

So we created the genre wheel. Now, you guys can all use this for creating your own comic books and your own stories and your own art. You draw a disc, a wheel, and you divide it up into sections – it can be four or eight – and in each of those sections you write a different genre. And what we're going to do first of all is, we're going to spin this wheel; we're going to pretend we're spinning this wheel, and whichever genre it lands on, that's the story we're going to start telling.

So let's say we spun our wheel of genres and it landed on horror – okay? Now, because we're starting with the genre, sort of, at its basic form, it's everything we expect. So our horror story has as its lead character, as its protagonist, the type of character we would expect to find in a horror story. So I would like to introduce you now to Bob the Zombie.

RE: Ahrrgh!

LE: Okay, good, right. Now, Bob the Zombie, because he's in a horror story, he does three main things, and they are all things that we would probably expect to see in a horror story. So number one, he likes to eat brains.

RE: Brains! Yum!

LE: Very good. Number two, he, sort of, wanders around looking a bit gooey and a bit disgusting, and generally being a bit, you know, off-putting to other people.

RE: Brains! Brains! Brains, brains, brains!

LE: [laugh]. Keep coming.

RE: Brains...oh!

LE: Zombies get itchy too; it's a fact. Okay, and finally number three, he likes to turn other people into zombies.

RE: Brains!

LE: Okay, good. Now, as I said, that is a horror story as we would expect. But we're using our wheel of genres today to try and create something a little bit more interesting. So let's imagine we spun our genre wheel; we've got three other genres other than horror on our wheel. Hands up which of the other genres would you like to see Bob the Zombie in, instead? Okay...

Girl #: Romance.

LE: Romance!

RE: Ugh!

LE: Who wants to see Bob the Zombie in a romance story?

Aud: [Cheers].

LE: I know I do. Okay, so Bob the Zombie has been staring lovingly from the dumpster that he lives in, at a beautiful, beautiful zombie girl for the past two weeks.

RE: Eh...Oh!

Aud: [Laughter].

LE: He finally has plucked up the courage to go over to her and speak to her. He climbs out of his house...

RE: [Grunting].

LE: Very good, very good. And begins to walk towards her. As he goes, he spots on the ground what he thinks is the greatest item to declare his love with that he has ever seen. He picks it up...

RE: [Blowing].

LE: ...and dusts it off, apparently [laugh]. He walks up to the girl, his heart beating in his chest...

RE: [Patting noises].

LE: ...or whatever is in there; something's beating, something gooey.

RE: [Grunting].

LE: He approaches the girl, he's nervous; he offers her this gift of his undying love and says...

RE: Brains!

LE: [laugh].

Aud: [Laughter].

LE: Ah, he struck out. It doesn't matter, Bob the Zombie, because we've got two genres left. Hands up who wants to see Bob the Zombie in one of our other genres; which of the other two genres would you like to see him in? Okay...

Boy #: Comedy.

LE: Comedy! Who wants to see Bob the Zombie in a comedy?

RE: I get the feeling I'm already in a comedy!

LE: Very good. So Bob the Zombie, having struck out with his girl, has decided that maybe there's another way to meet zombie girls and have general adoration; and that is to go on stage.

RE: [Grunting].

LE: So he's decided he is going to become the first, and probably only ever stand-up zombie comedian.

RE: Ahhrgh!

LE: He's been getting ready for his Edinburgh show for weeks and weeks and weeks. The whole show hangs off what he thinks is the greatest opening joke of any stand-up show ever. It's the night of the show; the audience is all packed out in the seats. He climbs up onto the stage. A spotlight hits him.

RE: Oh!

LE: [laugh]. He shuffles goonly up to the mike, clears his throat...

RE: [Cough].

LE: ...and delivers what he thinks is the greatest opening joke of any stand-up comedy act in the world, ever.

RE: Brains? Egh!

Aud: [Laughter].

LE: Got a laugh; that's good, that's good. So right, we've got one more genre left. Who wants to see Bob the Zombie in a crime story?

RE: [Growling].

LE: Okay, good, right. So there's been a murrder! Okay? I spoke Scottish in the middle of that sentence. There's been a murrder!

RE: Regional accent.

LE: Chief Detective, Superintendent Bob the Zombie policeman has arrived at the scene.

RE: Ugh!

LE: The victim lies in the middle of the room. There's blood everywhere. Bob the detective zombie, ex-comedian, walks around the room, walks around the crime scene inspecting all of the clues and evidence.

RE: Brains, brains, brains, brains, brains, brains! Brains! Heh!

LE: We've got a long way – okay. Finally he feels he knows who the murderer was. He points an accusing finger at the guilty party. The only thing that has yet to be revealed, Poirot-style, is just what the murder weapon is: putting his gooey hand into an even gooyeer evidence bag, Bob the Zombie pulls out what was used to commit this heinous crime, and says, accusationally:

RE: Brains!

Aud: [Laughter].

LE: Can we have a little round of applause for Bob the Zombie, please.

Aud: [Applause].

LE: One of the more dynamic zombies. So you can see there that by taking a character or elements of one story and forcing them into another story, we instantly start creating funny and weird and unusual, and unexpected stories. So when you are creating your own stories like this, as soon as it starts getting boring, put another genre in; think of the, sort of, the classic elements of that genre, and make your characters have to react with those. And continue mixing your breakfast cereal, because that's delicious.

RE: [laugh].

LE: Okay.

RE: Okay, that was a good story starter. Well, let's move on; let's try something different; let's move into the next slide, when it wants to join me. There we go. World! WORLD! That's my world voice; it has to be big enough for a whole planet; WORLD! World; why is world important? Well, world is important because every story takes place somewhere. There's no animation, no film you've ever watched, no game you've ever played, no book you've ever read, that takes place on a white background. They all exist in a world, and that world can be as important as the characters themselves. In fact, sometimes it can be even more important; it can be so important it takes on a character of its own.

I'm going to show you how this works today. And I'm going to show you how you can actually start to create entire stories just using the world, not using anything else at all. So let's begin by seeing if we can find a connection here. So guys, tell me if you've heard of a show – you've probably heard of a show, you've probably definitely heard of a show, and seen a show, whose theme tune goes a

little bit like this [singing] *The Simpsons*. Anybody heard of the Simpsons?
Yeah, you guys have all heard of the Simpsons.

Right, hands up who can tell me where the Simpsons live. Where do they live?
Hands up who knows. Okay; I like to make the roving mikes move.

Boy #: Springfield.

LE: Springfield!

RE: Springfield! Absolutely; the Simpsons live in Springfield. You all know Springfield. You know every single aspect of this world; you know that there's a power plant and that there's a zoo, and there's a school and there's a corner shop, and you know every bit of this world, okay? It's all very fun, it's all very interesting, but the most important aspect of Springfield is none of that stuff; it's just the name itself; Spring Field. And there are two parts here which we're going to snap in half now: crrrk. We've got the spring over here, and we've got the field over here.

Now, the field is the important bit, not the spring; so let's get rid of that: wheech, doing, doing, doing – oh, that's a rubbish joke!

LE: [laugh].

RE: Okay; field. Why is this important? Well, field is important because all over America there are loads and loads of towns that end with the word 'field', just like in England and Scotland there are loads of places that end with the word 'ton' or 'town'. In France it's ville; in Germany it's burg. What this field does, this bit stuck on the end, is it makes it sound like a real place; somewhere people really could live – okay? But what you put on the beginning, that actually can change the whole town; in fact, it can create the stories. I'm going to show you how we're going to do this with you guys right now; it's so simple and it's so quick, and it gets the stories going.

So hands up if you have a pet at home – any pet at all.

LE: Any pet.

RE: [Singing]. Any pet will do. Okay; so all I'm going to do is, I'm going to point to one of you, and I want you to tell me what type of animal it is, and then what the name is for your pet. And it could be your pet name for the pet, if that's funnier, or more interesting.

LE: The weirder the better.

RE: We don't mind; the weirder the better, as far as I'm concerned. So let's have, right, number one, girl on the end here. First of all, what type of animal do you have?

Girl #: A dog.

RE: A dog.

LE: A dog!

RE: And your dog is called?

Girl #: Sizzle.

LE: Sizzle!

RE: Sizzle! Boom! It's a good name for a dog. Sizzleburg.

LE: It's hot.

RE: It's grilling the town.

RE: It's hot...

LE: It's like it is up here.

RE: ...in Sizzleburg. In Sizzleburg every day, you know, like, you're having what I would presume is probably quite an untraditionally warm Scottish summer – yeah? I can see looks on your faces; you're struggling. You're struggling with the heat – so are we. But in Sizzleburg every day is hot enough to fry you like an egg.

LE: Yeah.

RE: Okay? You walk outside that door and it's just, crrrr!

LE: [laugh].

RE: A pile of ash, okay? So you've got to always think about what you're wearing; you've got to be in protection all the time – all the time. Everybody in Sizzleburg, pretty much everybody stays indoors the whole time. They don't meet many people, don't make many friends, okay? A bit sad. Let's try somewhere different; another pet. Hands up if you've got a pet at home. Now you understand how it works, you're going to see where we're going. So pet, pet, pet; let's have the boy there with his hand up. First of all, what type of animal?

Boy #: A dog.

LE: A dog.

RE: A dog. And what is your dog called?

Boy #: Bonsai.

RE: Bonsai the dog, okay. So those of you who don't know, bonsai is a hobby where you grow miniature trees and bushes, okay? Bonsai; tiny little plants, miniature gardens. Is your dog particularly small? Is it made of leaves?

Boy #: No.

LE: [laugh].

RE: [laugh]. Exactly! In Bonaiville everything is tiny!

LE: [laugh] Except the people!

RE: But everyone is normal size. So you're going, shall we take the kids to the park? It's a lovely, unfeasibly hot day in Edinburgh; let's take the kids to the park. All right, you ready? Yeah. Here we go!

LE: [laugh].

RE: There's the park down there, kids! Enjoy it from up here! There's a tiny little dog, and there's the smallest Frisbee I've ever seen thrown ever. I think I might have just trod on the mayor. Oh well, okay! One more, we'll do one more; one more, last pet, last pet, last pet! This girl right here; can we get a mike? What pet do you have – what type of animal?

Girl #: A fish.

LE: A fish!

RE: A fish; good.

LE: This is promising, this is promising.

RE: And your fish is called?

Girl #: Killer.

RE: Killer!

LE: Killer!

RE: What type of fish is it? What type of fish? Can you tell me what type of fish it is?

Girl #: I'm not sure.

RE: It's definitely not a shark, though, is it?

LE: It's not big, though, is it?

RE: And it doesn't have a lot of sharp teeth, and it's never killed anything. Okay, that's good. A fish with a name that doesn't match up; I like this. Okay: Killertown.

LE: No-one lasts long in Killertown.

RE: Nobody lasts long in Killertown. The only person who lasts long in Killertown is the person who's already dead.

LE: [laugh].

RE: Brains! [laugh]. Brains everywhere.

LE: Like a buffet for Bob the Zombie!

RE: Is, it's a buffet! There's another dead body over here – yum, yum, yum, yum. Ooh, there's one over there! But I've got no friends, because everybody's dead! Or a murderer.

Anyway, ridiculous; but the point here is, what did we do? We just took one word and stuck it, pew! In front of that last bit, and we could begin to create new stories, new worlds. We haven't put, necessarily, any characters in. I added Bob the Zombie there, but I didn't have to do that. Who we then put in the story to turn that into a bigger story is totally up to you, and you could interpret Killertown or Killerville any way you want it; Bonsaiburg could mean anything you want. But it was the simplest, quickest way to get into a story just using the world to create the beginning.

Which is great; but obviously, we need to talk a little bit about a character there, so it seems obvious that we move to character next.

LE: Okay, so character is probably the place that you quite often will start when you make your own comics and your own stories, because characters are usually at the heart of every story, every comic. It's always about someone. But what I want to talk to you before we get into who these characters are, is talking about the way you use your art to try and tell your reader lots of extra secret stuff that they don't even know they're being told; because your job as a comic artist is to try and impart as much information about who the character is, how they might

move, how they might act, what type of person they are, as you possibly can in the way you draw them.

And there are lots of little tricks with this, and I'm going to show you a few using some characters that you probably already know; and maybe some of these things you won't have even noticed. So the first is body language. Now, we're going to give you some examples in a moment of body language, but I'm just going to talk about one character. Actually, we'll do examples first.

RE: Do some examples.

LE: So body language is a very interesting thing that we do all the time, and we're not always aware that we do it. So we'll do an exercise very quickly with you guys here. Okay, it's time to act!

RE: You've just...you've seen me playing Bob the Zombie, and I think we'll all agree that was pretty impressive!

LE: [laugh].

RE: That's a Fringe show ready – it's in the can, isn't it, right there! Twenty-four dates ready to go. Okay, now you guys get to do a little bit of acting, because the best acting ever, because you don't even have to move from where you're sitting. All I want you to do – parents and children included.

LE: Yep.

RE: I just want you to show me, in the way you sit in your chair, okay, how you would be sitting in your chair if instead of talking about zombies and weird things like that, I was standing up here instead telling you how to tidy your bedroom. There's only one way to tuck the sheets in...

LE: You might slump down a bit...

RE: ...you've got to get really right in there and you've got to get round about there. I don't know if you've ever been taught how to professionally pump a pillow, but it's a little bit like playing an accordion.

LE: [laugh].

RE: Okay, that's good.

LE: Okay, it's good slumps; yeah, some people asleep; very good. It's good, it's good.

RE: Very good. Now show me, in the way that you're sitting in your chair, how you'd be sitting if instead of that, I was standing up here telling you how to get free sweets for life.

LE: Okay; good, good!

RE: Oh! Oh, a little bit more attentive!

LE: Okay, yeah. Are you going to tell them that?

RE: I do know the answer, but I'm not going to share it with you today.

LE: Oh, right, okay.

RE: So forgetting about sweets, if you can – you probably can't now, but if you can – that is body language. Now, the great thing about body language is we do it all the time, all of us, and usually we don't even know we're doing it. So let's say you're in school and your teacher asks you a question and it's something that you don't really know the answer to, and you don't really want to put your hand up in case you get it wrong and your friends laugh. So you sort of put your hand up, because it's always good to have a go, just in case. You don't really put it up; there's not a lot of effort in it, so you, sort of, hunker down in your chair and your hand probably comes up about that much...Owow!

LE: Owow!

RE: Owow! And you don't really want to get picked. But if your teacher asks you something which you really not only know the answer to, but it's something you care about passionately, well then, your hand's coming up and you're coming up out of your seat a bit, and you're probably wetting yourself a bit on the way up!

LE: [laugh].

RE: Because you're so excited – and that is body language, okay? And it portrays...

LE: You might be wetting yourself...

RE: And it portrays how we feel, but it's great, so when you're drawing characters, don't just think, here's my character standing, here's my character walking – quite difficult to walk like that – but think about what your character...how the way they stand tells us, you know, kind of, what they are, and who they are. So are they a, sort of, brave character? Do they stand like this and they're really confident? Are they, sort of, slightly nervous, and you know, sort of...you know, sort of, creep into places. Are they, kind of...and they love to...

LE: Oh!

RE: Or are they, you know, are they, kind of, evil and plotting? You know, your body totally changes based on how you're feeling. So body language is the first thing. The second thing we can do with characters – and it's a little bit, sort of, tied to body language – is all the other little elements that we draw on them when we're drawing them. And there are loads of little bits on characters that you don't usually notice, but actually, again, help to tell us loads of stuff. So Bugs Bunny has got these great big long ears because he's a rabbit, okay? That's fairly obvious. That's why he's got the big ears. But Bugs Bunny's ears are actually there for some completely different reason that no-one's ever told you; and that is that those ears are there to tell us, as the viewer of the cartoon or the reader of a comic, as much about his emotion as they can.

So when Bugs Bunny is surprised, his ears go up. When he's terrified, they go shaking flat on his head. When he's running away from someone, they flap along behind him. When he's thinking, one comes up and one comes down. These things are there to tell us loads about how he's feeling. In fact, quite often his ears tell us more about his emotion than his face does. So use all those little elements. It doesn't matter if your characters aren't creatures, aren't animals; you can do it with humans. Hair can stand on end; you know, you can use all these little elements to, kind of, emphasise who the character is and what they are doing.

So there are lots of ways you can use your characters, and the way you dress them, and the way they move, and the way they stand, to tell your reader loads and loads about who they are; and the idea you should have in your mind as an artist is that if someone opens your comic and they look at your characters, they should know a little bit about what those characters are like and how they might act, just by looking at them, without reading anything in the speech bubble. So that's, kind of, the key thing to remember when you're using characters in your stories.

RE: That's the main tip, then, for the drawing; but this is all about story starters; it's about jumping right in there and making it happen as quickly as possible. So we've created a little exercise here which does exactly this; we're going to create character and story at the same time. And it's often the hardest thing to do, when you're sitting down with a blank sheet of paper, is thinking what you're going to draw, what kind of story you're going to tell. Well, this is an exercise that we do. I'm going to show you how this works; and it does the two things at the same time. It's very simple.

We begin by picking a type of character, and by type of character I mean a monster, a type of monster or an animal or something like that. We then give them a job; the thing they do every single day when they go to work, okay? And lastly, we give them a hobby or an interest, the thing they are most interested in. So let's...we're going to try this with you guys, and then we're going to show you what we did and bring the art in as well. But let's start at the top bit. Let's have a character first of all. Hands up. Give me a type of character; any type of monster or animal that you can possibly think of. We don't mind; anything at all.

Boy #: Goldfish.

RE: A goldfish!

LE: A goldfish! Way to start, my friend!

RE: Okay; goldfish wakes up in the morning. [Popping noise]. I'm sure I've been here before.

LE: [laugh].

RE: I'm not sure I've been here before. Okay; alarm clock goes off.

LE: You won't remember this in seven seconds.

RE: I won't remember...

LE: You won't remember this in seven seconds.

RE: I won't remember this in seven seconds.

LE: You won't remember this in seven seconds.

RE: I won't remember this in seven...I won't remember what in seven seconds?

LE: ...won't remember this in seven seconds.

RE: What's a second?

LE: You won't remember this in seven seconds.

RE: Who am I? Where am I? Okay. [Popping noise]. Turn off the alarm clock. Fish goes to the bathroom to clean its teeth. [Popping noise]. Why am I here?

LE: [laugh].

RE: Okay, doesn't matter. Fish gets on the bus to go to work, okay? What job does this fish do during the day? Okay? What job does a goldfish do during the day?

And now what I want you to think is, try and think of a job that's as far from anything a goldfish should ever do in its life, okay? What is the last job a goldfish should ever do? Boy in the blue football shirt right there.

Boy #: Policeman.

LE: Policeman!

RE: Policeman! Excellent!

LE: It sounds good.

RE: Excellent.

LE: It sounds good.

RE: Let's make him a traffic cop.

LE: Oh, that's good, that's good.

RE: Traffic cop, okay, yeah? Traffic cop, middle of a very busy highway, okay? [Popping noises].

LE: [laugh]. He's only got those little flippers [laugh].

RE: Why am I doing this? [Blows raspberry].

Aud: [laugh].

RE: Okay, he's not going to last very long in that job.

LE: I like that.

RE: But this goldfish has a dream; he has a secret dream; he has a hobby or a passion, the thing he would like to be doing much more than causing massive pile-ups in the middle of Edinburgh, okay? What is this goldfish's secret dream? What's his hobby? What's the thing he'd like to do more than anything else? Boy right here.

Boy #: Stunt man.

LE: Stunt man!

RE: Stunt man! Yes!

LE: I like this guy; I like this guy.

RE: Stunt man; okay, I love that; goldfish there in his bowl; he's like, pop, pop, take the water out!

LE: [laugh].

RE: Take it out! Take all the water out!

LE: I can do this!

RE: Now replace it with gasoline! Yeah! Now add a match...

LE: [laugh].

RE: Why am I in a tank full of gasoline? Peow! Okay. Let's try this one more time. Let's have a different type of character – it can be a monster, animal, anything you want. You know how this works, so you can see where this is going. Okay, let's go to on the end right here – that's easy for the mike.

Boy #: A leopard.

LE: A leopard!

RE: Yes, leopard!

LE: Leopard!

RE: Okay. Leopard wakes up in the morning: I'm one of the coolest animals...

LE: [laugh].

RE: ...in the animal kingdom, because I can move fast or I can move slow. And any way I do it, I just look good! Mm! Leopard's alarm clock goes off...

LE: Whatever you think, you cannot change those spots.

RE: I can't change these spots.

LE: Whatever you think, you cannot change those spots.

RE: I can't change these spots.

LE: Whatever you think...

RE: I'll need to change this alarm clock now.

LE: [Makes sound of hitting alarm clock to switch it off 00:27:45] Pew!

RE: Okay. Leopard goes to the bathroom, cleans its teeth. No, I don't – they're perfect!

LE: [laugh].

RE: Okay. Leopard gets on a bus, going to do his nine to five job.

LE: Everyone else gets off the bus.

RE: Everyone else gets off the bus; he doesn't travel with strangers. Okay, what job is this leopard doing nine to five? Okay, yes – boy right here.

Boy #: Talent agent.

LE: Talent agent!

RE: Talent agent – awesome!

LE: Good. And over at the Edinburgh Festival...

RE: Oh good, okay. Talent agent, leopard; remember, Leopard is pretty much perfect! And he's looking for talent; he's a talent scout; he's looking for new actors and models and things like that. He's sitting there and in comes the next guest, and what is your name?

LE: Oh, it's...

RE: I'm not interested in what your name is...

LE: [laugh].

RE: ...because I'm in the room. I'm the tal...you fail! What is your name?

LE: Well, it's...

RE: No! I don't care. I am the most beautiful thing you have ever seen!

LE: [laugh].

RE: Maybe I should just hire myself!

LE: [laugh].

RE: Okay, he's not going to get much work done; not going to hire any particularly famous people. But he has a secret dream, okay. What is his secret dream – this incredibly vain, self-centred animal? Boy right in the middle there with an Angry Birds T-shirt on: peow!

Boy #: Sleeping.

RE: Sleeping!

LE: Sleeping! A professional sleeper!

RE: Yeah.

LE: An unusual job; one I quite like.

RE: But actually, I think he's going to succeed, isn't he, because he's like, what is the point of being awake in a world full of people less attractive than me, less talented than me? I'll just sleep this life out. [Snoring]. Yeah, okay, good, right – good, interesting, good. Some very good ideas. We're going to take a little bit of that; we're going to show you what we did, and we're going to bring the art in and show you how it changes once you add the art.

What did we choose? We chose an ogre.

LE: Yeah.

RE: We chose a bank manager as the day job; not a great stretch!

LE: [laugh].

RE: And lastly, we said that the ultimate hobby that they wanted to do was bird-watching. So let's get straight into this.

LE: And the point with this is that it's...by creating a character like this, we actually create a character who is already in the middle of their story; you don't even need to think of a story.

RE: Yeah, we're creating multiple stories at the same time. So we begin with what we call the conventional character. So here's our ogre, okay? He's big, he's green, he's mean; we've seen all this stuff before. He's wearing Lord of the Rings chic clothing, okay? He's got a big mace in one hand. He looks what we think of when we think of orcs and ogres and goblins and stuff like that. Okay, this is convention, okay? This is what we expect. But this ogre is a bank manager, so we've got to bring that in, now. We're going to stir that ingredient into the pot, and we get this guy!

Here we go! Okay. Sort of similar, but some things have changed; what's happened? Well, we've got a little hat now; a little bowler hat perched up on top of his head – a bit too small for his head; it's actually pinching his brain. He's got a little waistcoat on, and now he's got his shirt, and it's untucked. He's wearing a

tie underneath his big skull necklace. He's got a briefcase in one hand, and all those papers are falling out of the briefcase, because remember, he's not good at the job; your character isn't good at their day job.

So he's looking there. Most of all, the expression on his face has changed. Back here he was all [evil voice] malevolent; evil. Here, he's all 'why the briefcase?' Okay? He's not happy any more; he's not happy, right? So this is one story you can tell. This is interesting. But we're going to move this on, because he's got a secret dream; so this ogre, this ogre bank manager, wants to be a bird-watcher. So let's see what happens when we bring that in as well. We get this guy. Or you get this guy: boom! There we go.

Okay. So we're not getting rid of stuff; we're actually adding to what we had; so we've still got the general character; but the first thing that's changed is his silhouette, which is the outline of the character on the page. He's got a big carrion bird sitting on his shoulder; a big scavenger, and that's actually changed his outline. His little hat that was too tight for his head...well, he's started to graffiti things now, and he's written on that, 'I [heart] birdies', okay?

LE: [laugh].

RE: He's got a little notebook in his pocket saying 'Birdies I saw', and probably most importantly, he's got a tiny little bird in the other pocket. Now, why this is important is because that's now what he's looking at. His expression has changed again, okay? He's now happy. The papers are still falling out of the briefcase, the shirt's still untucked, but now we're looking at this character and thinking, the papers are falling out of the briefcase because he's not paying any attention to his job – okay? He's too busy thinking about his hobby.

So we've taken a character back here who was totally conventional: everything we expected. We gave them a job they did not enjoy, and we gave them a hobby that they really enjoyed, and we start to create multiple stories, as Lorenzo said. How did an ogre ever become a bank manager, and how is that bank manager ever going to get to realise his dream of being a bird-watcher? And you can do this in ten seconds; we just showed you how quick it is to put these together; and it will always create a brand new story. So after character, where do we go next?

Well, now we move on to stuff!

LE: Okay! Stuff! Some stories have a lot of stuff in them. Some stories don't have much stuff, and that is the true fact about stories.

RE: [laugh].

- LE: That's the end. No: but stuff in stories...
- RE: That's science!
- LE: ...is basically anything that, kind of, isn't a character or a big bit of the world, like the floor, or a building. Stuff is often referred to as props. Now, in story-telling, props can surprisingly sometimes be even more important than character. So a chair can be a prop; a pencil can be a prop. And the other thing that props can do is they can totally change where a story goes and what happens. Now, before we get into using props to create stories, I'm going to show you – well, Robin is going to show you – how taking a prop out of a story we already know completely rewrites what happens. So we're going to act out a scene from a fairly famous...
- RE: Yeah, pretty famous...
- LE: ...book series. Don't know if it's as famous as ours or not, but it's called something – is it Hairy Plover?
- RE: Harry...Harry...
- LE: Harry Potter.
- RE: Harry Potter.
- LE: Harry Potter: has anybody heard of that series?
- RE: Have you heard of Harry Potter?
- LE: Right.
- RE: Oh, a few people have heard of Harry Potter.
- LE: And so we're going to...Robin is going to be Harry.
- RE: Maybe...maybe more famous than our book; who knows?
- LE: Who knows? And he is going to act out a scene; first of all where Harry has no props, nothing to help him; and then we're going to give Harry some props and see if that changes what happens in the story. So, okay; the floor is yours, brother.
- RE: Harry Potter with empty pockets; okay, so imagine, if you will, you've put the sorting hats on your heads, and you've been transported to Hogwarts School of Tomfoolery and Nonsense; I think that's its official title. Okay? You've gone to this school of wizardry and witches and things like that, and you're in the highest tower of the school, and in the middle of this corridor that you've found up here is

a door; there's a single door in the middle, okay? And on this door – it's a massive door – is a huge sign, and this sign reads: you know...

LE: Are you going to be Harry?

RE: I'm going to be Harry...

LE: Ah, yes, you're going to be Harry [laugh].

RE: I'm going to be Harry, so I'm going to be Harry. So there's this huge sign on this door. So I'm going to be Harry; I'm going to play Harry Potter, okay? The sign on this door reads, 'Danger! Do not enter! Behind this door is a whole bunch of stuff that's going to kill you: and I mean you, Harry Potter. Yes, Harry Potter, I'm talking to you, Harry Potter. Harry, are you listening, Harry? Harry? Harry? Pay attention Harry; you never do your lines. Pay attention, Harry!' Signed, the door.

Okay, I'm going to play Harry Potter discovering this door, okay, and today I'm going to be a French Harry Potter.

LE: Ah!

RE: Don't get many French Harry Potters, so they're under-represented. I'll be a French Harry Potter. So, Harry Potter in the corridor without any props, okay? Finding this door. Would he act a little bit like this, just like [Inaudible 00:34:54]: [Sings in French]. Zut alors! Look at zis door! Is a mighty fine door! And look at zis; zere is a huge sign on zis door, let us have a little look 'ere, it says, danger! Do not enter, 'Arry Potter.' Behind zis door a whole bunch of stuff zat could kill you; and I do mean you, 'Arry Potter. I mean you, 'Arry Potter. You, 'Arry Potter, 'Arry Potter, I am talking to you...'

Ah, it's a long sign. Oh, it's a long sign, but it is a good sign, no? If I go through zis door, I could be killed! Me! The most beautiful French 'Arry Potter that ever performed at the Edinburgh Festival. I could be killed; I zink it is a terrible thing; I don't have anything to look after myself; I'm not going to go through zis door. But not only am I not going to go through zis door; I'm going to go round ze school and tell all of my friends, and even my enemies not to go through zis door, because they might be hurt. It's a good sign; it's a good door; yeah.

That's not really how Harry Potter acts, is it?

LE: Let's give him his props.

RE: Just give me my props. I'm now propped up, okay? English Harry Potter finding this door: hullo, door: poomph! Oh my goodness! A whole bunch of stuff that's going to kill me; but don't worry, because I've got a twig.

Aud: [laughter].

RE: Stay back, I've got a twig! It's a unicorn hair twig. I found it in my garage, and I'm going to twig you in the eyes. I'm going to twig you in the goolies; I'm going to flip you round and twig you up the bum. [Clears throat]. Twig! Ridiculous!

LE: Okay, so as Robin showed then, props actually totally change where stories go.

RE: It turned Harry Potter into a Ninja!

LE: Sometimes for the better, and sometimes for the worse. Now; we're talking today, though, about how you guys create your stories, and actually props are really good for when you're in a, sort of, funny bit in your story and you're not really sure how to make it interesting and send it off in a new direction. So when you take...let me give you an example of useful props, as we just said there. So the wand was very useful. Now, hands up who's ever been to the beach or the seaside.

Okay, now keep your hand up if you can tell me one thing that you definitely do want to pack when you go to the beach: roving mike, this girl here in the white...here we go. What's one thing you definitely do want at the beach?

Girl #: To swim in the sea?

LE: To swim in the sea; well, that's something you do, but let's say what we need for that; swimming costume, okay? Always pack your swimming costume to go to the beach; that makes sense. Now, what is the one thing that you would never pack to go to the beach? Hands up. Give me something, the weirdest thing possible...

RE: The last thing in the entire world that you'd ever pack?

LE: ...that you would never, ever take to the beach.

Girl #: Toast.

LE: Toast!

RE: Toast! [laugh].

LE: Hot bread, eh! Not that useful at the beach; sometimes delicious, but not really useful for a trip to the beach; very good. Okay, so hot toast; fair enough. Now, so you can imagine that those two scenarios would be different; you get to the beach and you've only packed a piece of toast. Now, Robin's going to show us in perhaps a slightly more dynamic setting than the beach, how changing a prop totally changes what happens to our character and the direction our story goes in. So how do you feel about parachuting?

RE: I would love to go parachuting!

LE: Oh, yeah! Robin's going to go parachuting.

RE: Yeah!

LE: Now, hands up; what is the one thing he definitely, definitely wants in his backpack when he goes parachuting?

Boy #: A parachute.

LE: A parachute.

RE: Eh!

LE: It seems so simple when they get it right.

RE: Good, good!

LE: Now, what is the one thing you definitely don't want in your backpack when you jump out of a plane? Right, roving mike, we'll go to...

Boy #: A rock.

LE: A rock!

RE: A rock!

LE: That's good; a huge boulder. Let's say boulder; let's go bigger. Good, my friend, okay.

RE: A huge boulder, okay, all right. Well, that's okay; I'm very excited I'm going parachuting; it's going to be great!

LE: Are you ready? Ready? We're going to latch you on; we're going to latch you on.

RE: Latch me in, [Inaudible 00:38:44] okay. Okay, we're in the plane, here we are.

- LE: Approaching the drop zone.
- RE: Okay; 30,000 feet above Potterrow here; the BBC...I can see the BBC right down there.
- LE: There it is, there it is.
- RE: Oh, hello Mr BBC! I'm going to try and land on the BBC. Me, BBC; me, BBC...
- LE: I think you can do it; I think you can do it.
- RE: BBC, me; me, BBC...
- LE: Okay, are you ready?
- RE: Oh, I'm very excited, I'm very excited.
- LE: I'm nervous; I'm nervous for you.
- RE: I'm nervous, I'm nervous.
- LE: Okay, here we are. Are you ready?
- RE: Three, two, one: go! Wheew! One thousand, two thousand, three thousand, four thousand; pull! Chink! A boulder!
- LE: [laugh].
- RE: A boulder! What am I going to do with...splat!
- LE: [laugh].
- Aud: [laughter].
- RE: [Squelch: blowing raspberries].
- LE: Okay. I think just once on that. Okay, so you can see how changing the object...
- RE: Who enjoyed killing me there? Everyone?
- LE: Ye-es! So you can see how changing the object totally changed the way your story is going. Now, you don't need to make it as drastic as that; you don't need to wipe out your cast members in such a way. But changing the thing they pull out of their bag when they need something else really changes what happens in your story. And that brings us along to obstacles.
- RE: Boof!

RE: Here we go: obstacles. This is great! Obstacles are important. Now, this is a good one, because this is something we use all the time when we're planning our stories. When you're planning your stories, it can be quite hard to think about the whole book, the whole cartoon, the whole comic, whatever you're doing. One of the best ways we found – very simple – is this: you get a huge sheet of paper, okay, and in one corner you put 'home'; and that's 'start' – something like that. That's the beginning of your story. And in the very opposite corner, diagonal corner, you put 'goal' or 'finish', okay?

LE: Yeah.

RE: So your story is going to begin in one corner, and it's going to end in the other. Now, if we don't do anything else with the story and we just join those two up – straight line: it's really boring.

LE: Yeah.

RE: No stories are created like that. What we like to do is we like to create a winding path, and we do it by getting some obstacles and things that are going to get in the way of our heroes or heroines, their story, and we scatter them onto the page, two or three, and then we connect the line between those points; and each of those points is going to be another little story within the story; something that's going to make it interesting again.

We've connected up here with a little wiggly dotted line.

LE: Okay. What you're doing there is you're drawing the plot of your story, so you can see exactly what's happened before you start writing.

RE: Yes; what he said; the plot of the story. You've got all the points; I was coming back to that; I like this stuff. So we're connecting these various elements here, and we like to do it with a dotted line, because you often do that on a map.

LE: Yes.

RE: Hands up if you've seen any of the Indiana Jones movies, you guys. You know who Indiana Jones is?

LE: Yeah.

RE: Right, yeah. We all know who Indiana Jones is. Now, thinking back to your trip to the beach with your family, okay, have any of you – hands up if you've been on a really long car journey before – any of you with your hands up, yeah? Okay.

Keep your hand up if while on that car journey, while sitting in the car, you've delivered the line 'Are we there yet?'

Aud: Yeah, yeah!

LE: [laugh].

RE: Okay. And keep your hand up, as well, if you're one of the people who has turned round and said, 'No, we are not there yet! We've a long way to go!' Okay, all right. But Indiana Jones doesn't travel like that. He doesn't take long car journeys. He travels, permanently, by dotted line.

LE: [laugh].

RE: When Indiana Jones gets in a plane or a boat, everything stops, a map appears – dot, dot, dot, dot, dot – and he gets out and goes, 'Oh, that was quick!' Okay, imagine that. Hands up who would like to be able to travel by dotted line, okay? Yeah, because then a car journey changes, doesn't it? You get in the back, and before you can say, 'Are we there yet?' – 'Yes, we are, actually!'

LE: [laugh].

RE: Yes. Yeah, we just arrived. Didn't you see the dotted line?

LE: [laugh].

RE: Why have you brought that toast to the beach?

LE: [laugh].

RE: I told you to bring your swimming trunks! Okay, important. Dotted lines are great, though, because in books we do not write every step of the journey. We don't write every single footfall of our characters; we jump from scene to scene, from obstacle to obstacle. And the fun thing about obstacles is that they can create absolutely amazing stories within stories. You can do anything you want. I'll show you very, very quickly how you do this.

You're not at school at the moment, but obviously school is going to start at some point. Let's say you're on the way to school; hands up! Give me one obstacle of a morning that could stop you getting to school. When you get up in the morning, okay, give me the most normal thing in the world, or the weirdest thing. What can actually stop you, on a school day, from leaving the house and getting to school, or if you've left the house, reaching your school.

Yes. Lady, hold on, hold on.

Lady #: Your house has fallen into a big hole.

RE: Your house has fallen into a huge hole.

LE: Before you've even left the door...

RE: ...you've even left the door, you open the door and you go, ooh... [laugh]. Whoo!
That's a bit, oh!.

Aud: [laughter]

RE: Well, there's no getting out of here!

LE: [laugh].

RE: No mobile reception, either. Okay, very good. Anything else, different obstacle?
Something strange – yes, boy here. Can we get a microphone?

Boy #: A man with a bazooka?

RE: A man with a bazooka!

LE: A man with a bazooka!

LE: Yeah, yeah! That would stop me going to school.

RE: Yeah, yeah! Yeah, yeah. Especially if it's your dad.

LE: [laugh].

Aud: [laughter].

RE: He's standing right beside you, you know, and you're saying, I just want to get in
the car, dad. He's like, hang on! [laugh]. Hang on! I never did like Mr Phillips
from 23!

LE: [laugh].

RE: Yeah, yeah! With your interestingly carved front lawn – brrrh! Okay, right.
Excellent, excellent obstacles. And these create brilliant stories; and you can do
this sort of stuff all the time. Now, we are, sort of, getting towards the last few
stages here. Obstacles is a great one, but we're coming to one now which is
very important and which is a little bit similar, but actually...

LE: Yup.

RE: ...takes us in a different direction. And that is choices!

LE: Okay! Choices. Every single story is absolutely ram-packed with choices. It's all full of choices all the time, and in fact that's because our lives are full of choices. You may think your life isn't full of choices. You may think that when you wake up in the morning you have to do everything your parents say, and then they tell you to go to bed at the end of the day. But it's not true. Every single day we wake up with choices. I wake up in the morning and, you know, I can get out of one side of the bed or the other. Now admittedly, one of the sides I'm going to fall out of the window, but it's still a choice!

RE: [laugh].

LE: It's still a choice, so every single day your life is full of choices, and you have to make these choices. Now, in stories giving your characters choices is not just a case of them saying, oh, will I do this or I do that? The choice should be really drastic; in fact the choice should be, kind of, story-changing. If you're writing your comic books and your characters have got to a certain point and you're like, oh, I'm not really sure what to do and where it's going next – give them a really difficult choice! If they are with a friend, give them a choice where they either have to leave the friend behind or go on somewhere with them, but maybe it's even more dangerous. Give them a choice about whether they go down this road or that road; decisions that will affect the story, so the reader really feels like the character is, kind of, a little bit in charge of their own destiny, but they're having to make these difficult choices.

Now, what we wanted to do is, one of the greatest ways of creating a story with choices is a, sort of, choose your own adventure story, where you give your reader the choice and then they choose where the story goes. And we're going to get you guys to do that with us live today. So we are going to enact a story, and you guys are going to decide what happens next all the way through. So would you like to...

RE: Okay, yeah, let's begin this. Let's say we've been creating a fantasy story, okay, a classic fantasy story. And our heroes have travelled a long way; they've climbed out of big holes, they've avoided fathers with bazookas, they've eaten a bit of toast, okay?

LE: [laugh].

RE: And they find themselves at the goal, okay. And their goal is this huge fortress, and they've heard, along the story, the reason they've taken this massive journey is that they've heard that in the toppermost, toppermost tower, okay, there is a treasure chest containing the treasure they have always dreamed of, okay; the

ultimate treasure in the entire universe. It's right up there in that tower, okay? They've got to get there, so they approach this fortress and they approach it, and there's a huge wall, massive, 200ft high stone wall, and they see a doorway in the middle of there. So we approach the doorway; huge door. And the first thing they do is, they rip down the massive, massive sign that's made out to Harry Potter; lets get rid of that.

LE: [laugh].

RE: Okay. And we look at this huge door, and now, we've got choices. And obviously the first thing you think of is, well, let's knock on the door. Let's see if anyone's at home. So we [knocking sound] just make sure someone's at home. [Whistling]. And maybe I'll try once more; once more [knocking sound].

LE: [laugh]

RE: [Whistling]. Doesn't seem to be anybody in at the moment. Okay, you're a little bored waiting for someone to answer the door. You look around, and there in the dirt beside the door you see two toothpicks – a bit strange, you think. A bit weird. Okay. Never mind, ignore that for a second. You go back [knocking]. Still no answer at the door: so choice number one; hands up if you would like to continue knocking on the door until the end of time, and you turn into a pile of dust and guts. Or option number two, picking up the two toothpicks and attempting to scale a 200ft wall just with toothpicks. Hands up who would like to keep knocking on the door until the end of time? Some of you will; that's just fine; you'd make amazing comic book artists, because that's what it feels like.

LE: [laugh].

RE: Okay. Hands up who would like to pick up the toothpicks and try and scale a massive 200ft wall. Yes!

LE: Yes! Okay, so you pick up the two toothpicks and you begin to scale the wall. [Grunting]. Not difficult, not easy, scaling a wall with toothpicks; up you go; and you're like, oh, shouldn't have had that curly-wurly at lunch. There you go. Okay, keep going up, keep going up. And you get to the top of the wall. Wheew! And the wind's blowing and you realise that although you're high up, and there's a huge, huge drop down to the ground, you're still not at the top of the tower. And you look over to your left, and you see a huge staircase arcing up to the tower, and at a rough count, you think there's one, two...ten...a thousand stairs!

RE: [laugh].

LE: And you think...

RE: That's some good counting, brother!

LE: ...that's a lot of work. But over to your right there's a cannon, and you're thinking, well, I could take the stairs, but you know, I could shoot myself out of the cannon into the top of the tower! Hands up who wants to take the stairs.

RE: Oh yes, there's somebody!

LE: Good cardio; it keeps you fit.

RE: A workout there.

LE: Hands up who wants to shoot themselves out of a cannon.

RE: Yeah! Yes, it's cannon time! Okay, let's get in this cannon; okay. One leg up, one leg up; and a sexy, sexy cannon dance.

LE: [laugh].

RE: Okay; oh, my bum's got a little bit bigger since last time. Okay. Oh! Okay, I'm in the cannon; there's the tower up there; I lean a little bit forward. Yeah, oh yes, I can see a window; I can see a window up there. Okay, I lean a little bit...okay, and there's a long taper coming out of the side of the cannon. We're going to light this: crrrgh! This is going to fire the cannon. And about halfway down the burning taper you start to think to yourself, I'm not sure this was a good IDEA!

LE: [laugh].

RE: Pheww! Through the window; stained glass tumbles everywhere, and you find yourself in this immense corridor stretching away into the distance. And at the very end of the corridor you see this giant, ornate treasure chest, okay, in which is the supposed ultimate treasure of the entire universe – okay? But between you and the treasure chest there is an absolutely massive snake, okay? And its head is right in front of you – there's no way past – and this thing looks mean; it looks ready to eat you good! Okay? Choices!

LE: [laugh].

RE: Okay, choice number one: do you sit down with the snake and try and work out its problems?

Aud: [laughter].

RE: I mean, why so angry?

LE: [laugh].

RE: Was it something your mother did when you were younger?

LE: [laugh].

Aud: [laughter].

RE: Did you not get enough hugs? I mean, we can talk about this; we can discuss this. I'm sure we can work through all your problems; you don't have to eat me. Okay; that's choice one. Choice two, you could curl up in a ball, let the snake eat you, and two days later pooh you out next to the treasure chest.

LE: [laugh].

RE: Hands up who wants to work out the snake's problems.

LE: [voices overlap 00:50:15].

RE: Some of you: good, future social workers, that's what I like to see. Hands up who wants to get swallowed by a snake and poohed out two days later right by the treasure!

LE: [laugh].

RE: Yes! Snake pooh!

LE: Okay, so as you saw there, the choices, they're not always I definitely want to do that, or I definitely want to do that; but what you found was that your readers, you guys, always want the choice that is the most interesting, the most funny or dangerous for the character, or has the most potential for something even better to happen next. So when you're creating your stories, think about that, and it will make it more enjoyable for you as the writer and as the artist, and it will make your readers absolutely love it, because they never know what your characters are going to do, and they just want them to go into that next dangerous situation.

So we spoke briefly there about treasure.

RE: Yeah, let's get to treasure!

LE: Now, there's one thing – we've talked all about all the things you tell your reader, and all the ideas you give your reader when you're writing your story, and all the things you want to think about when you're creating your stories; but actually, there's one bit of story-telling where you do nothing, and it's actually the most powerful bit, quite often. If you think about horror stories, quite often the scariest moment of a horror story is not the blood and guts and arms coming off, and all that sort of stuff; it's the bit where the characters are in the house, and there's

someone or something outside, and they don't know what it is. And they can hear something scratching around outside, and they don't know what it is.

And we as the reader, or as the viewer if it's a horror movie, our imaginations at that point are like a firework display; we are imagining the worst things that could possibly be outside the door. The writer hasn't had to do anything; they've just said, the most terrible thing you could imagine is outside the door and it's trying to get in. So when you're creating your stories, think about what you don't show the reader; think about the thing that you hide from them, or leave it up to them to imagine what it is, and they will invest in your story and fill in the blanks.

For an example of that, if I said to you guys, you've climbed up this tower, and at the top of this tower is this unbelievable treasure in this treasure chest; if I asked you guys to put your hands up and tell me what the greatest treasure in the world was, you would all...

RE: Let's see, let's see what it is!

LE: Okay, right, hands up!

RE: What's inside the treasure chest?

LE: What would be the best thing ever to find in this treasure chest?

RE: There's no such thing as a wrong answer, because this is your treasure chest; your ultimate treasure.

LE: Okay.

RE: Let's go to...now, the girl who has put her hand up; this time she wants to say. Right okay, what do you want inside the treasure chest?

Girl #: Gold.

RE: Gold!

LE: Gold! Good, a classic one. Money! Mon-ey!

RE: Cold, hard cash.

LE: Cash! Okay, that's a good one. That's a good start. Let's have another one, let's have another one.

RE: All different.

LE: Something different, something different. Okay, roving mike...

RE: Look, two feet and two hands.

LE: Yeah, he's got feet up. That wins.

RE: Two feet and two hands. That one definitely gets picked.

Boy #: Toast.

RE: Toast [laugh].

LE: Toast! Yes! Yes! It was a long climb, wasn't it? Because if you've been on the road adventuring for five solid weeks, gold is no good to you!

RE: [laugh].

LE: Especially if you're hungry; but a piece of delicious toast! Just toasted the right amount, just there with a glass of milk or orange juice; that is a true treasure, okay?

RE: [laugh]. One more; I want one more, because that one was funny. Okay, somebody I haven't...this boy here, yes, yes?

Boy #: A treasure map.

RE: A treasure map!

LE: A treasure map! The treasure is...

RE: Because it's both...

LE: ...another adventure.

RE: Well, it's both giving and taking at the same time.

LE: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

RE: You get all the way there, and you go, yeah, treasure map...a treasure map? I thought I was reading a treasure map!

LE: Has anybody ever heard the word 'cliff-hanger'? A cliff-hanger is a bit in the story where you leave your reader wanting to know what happens next when they turn the page; and everybody talks about that bit, but the most important bit of the cliff-hanger is that when they get the solution, the person grabs onto the ledge, you instantly then give them another cliff-hanger. And that's what we've just done there; we've climbed up and gone through all this stuff, and what's in the treasure chest? What's in it? We open it up – it's a treasure map!

RE: [laugh].

LE: That's another cliff-hanger! What's this a treasure map to? If this was hidden here, whatever is hidden on this map must be really good! Two bits of toast, maybe.

RE: How many snakes are going to need to pooh you out for that map?

LE: Okay, so...Right, so we're coming to an end, now. Now, we've talked loads and loads about why we love making stories and why you guys should enjoy making your own comics, but we thought we'd give you one more quick example. Are you ready for some sound effects?

RE: I'm always ready.

LE: One more example of just how many things you can fit into stories, into comic books, and how varied these things are. So we will go through this list, and Robin will try to...you'll present them as you go.

RE: I'll be doing my very best. Here we go.

LE: In a comic book, you can have: action...

RE: Hah!

LE: Danger.

RE: Oh!

LE: Comedy.

RE: [Loud laugh].

LE: Romance.

RE: [Kissing noise]

LE: [laugh].

RE: Ahh!

LE: [laugh]

RE: [Kissing noises].

LE: [laugh]. Monsters.

RE: Arrgh!

LE: Mayhem.

RE: Arrgh, arrgh!

LE: Oh sorry – monsters.

RE: Arrgh, arrgh, arrgh...

LE: Monsters...

RE: Arrgh, arrgh, arrgh.

LE: [laugh]. Mayhem.

RE: [Inaudible 00:54:57].

LE: Heroes.

RE: [Manly laugh].

LE: Villains.

RE: Brains...

LE: [laugh]. Magic.

RE: Pizzamm!

LE: Explosions...

RE: Pow!

LE: [laugh]. Unusual hats.

RE: Oh, would you just look at my hat! Ever seen a hat like this before? I don't think you have; this one is unusual!

LE: Wild beasts.

RE: Brains...

LE: [laugh]. Cursed sausages.

RE: Sizzle...wait, wait a minute, wait a minute...

LE: Have another go, have another go.

RE: Cursed sausages: I can do it better than that. Sizzle... [sigh].

LE: That's good enough. A legendary weapon.

RE: SIZZLE!

LE: [laugh].

RE: Rah! [Puffing and blowing].

LE: Secret doorways.

RE: [Creaking noise].

LE: Chain mail underpants.

RE: Oh!

LE: Yeah.

RE: Oh, oooh!

LE: That's going to chafe.

RE: Ohhh!

LE: That's why they all moved so funny in the Hobbit.

RE: It's going to leave a mark!

LE: [laugh].

RE: Oh, I don't want to go adventuring in these. Umm! Crrgh!

LE: Mazes.

RE: Oh, I can't find my way out of here.

LE: Skulls

RE: [grunt].

LE: Surprising occurrences.

RE: Something just happened over there.

LE: [laugh]. Traps.

RE: I beg your pardon?

LE: Traps.

RE: Ahrrrg! [screaming] a boulder! Arrgh! [Squelch].

LE: Ancient civilisations.

RE: I am old!

LE: Future worlds.

RE: I am new! [whispering].

LE: Quests.

RE: Something to do!

LE: Riddles.

RE: Something I don't understand how to do!

LE: Deadly poisons.

RE: I would not drink this! [Laugh]. It's wee.

Aud: [laughter].

LE: Talking cats.

RE: I said miaow. I also said purr. I mainly said miaow.

LE: Terrifying evil.

RE: Brains!

LE: [laugh]. And...

LE/RE: Massive piles of hidden treasure.

RE: We have been the Etherington Brothers.

LE: You guys have been absolutely awesome. Give yourselves a huge round of applause.

RE: Yeah!

[Applause].

LE: Well done.

[Music]