



## EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

episode 076 – Joanna Hathaway  
On Writing Your Passions  
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r.r. campbell 00:01 This is the Writescast Network brought to you by Dandelion Web Marketing and the University of Wisconsin Writers' Institute and always streaming at [writescast.net](http://writescast.net)

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[intro music begins, fades to background]

r.r. campbell 00:54 "Write what you know." That's the old adage anyway, but writing what one knows can in some cases be even more challenging than making it up as we go along. So how can we write about topics, relationships, and experiences that are personal to us without risking alienating our readers and can writing what we know really lead to a commercially viable manuscript, assuming that's what we want for our work? My conversation with this episode's guest will suggest that yes it's possible to write about that which we hold dear and that doing so will not preclude a writer from commercial success and that it's quite the opposite, in fact.

Hey there, I'm author writing coach and Writescast Network founder r.r. campbell, and welcome to episode 76 of your listener supported r.r. campbell writescast here on the Writescast Network brought to you by Dandelion Web Marketing and the University of Wisconsin Writers' Institute.

This episode's guest is Joanna Hathaway. Joanna was born in Montreal and is an avid storyteller who was inspired to write after reading her great-grandfather's memoirs of the first World War. A lifelong history buff, she now has shelves filled with biographies and historical accounts and perhaps one to many books about pilots. She can often be found reading, traveling, or riding horses.

Her debut novel, *DARK OF THE WEST* is the first in a World Wars infused fantasy series of forbidden love and deadly revenge. *STORM FROM THE EAST*, the second book in the series, just hit shelves on February 11th, 2020.

It was great to interview Joanna and to catch up with her after having first connected at the 2019 University of Wisconsin Writers' Institute, and I'm sure you'll enjoy our conversation just as much as I did.

So without further ado, let's get right into my conversation with Joanna Hathaway. Stay tuned after the interview for updates on what you can expect next from the Writescast Network. And thanks as always for listening.

[music swells, then fades away]

r.r. campbell 02:43 Thank you so much Joanna Hathaway for joining me for this episode of the r.r. campbell writescast here on the Writescast Network.

Joanna Hathaway 02:53 Thank you so much, Ryan, for having me today. I'm really excited to be here.

r.r. campbell 02:57 Yeah, it'll be really great to catch up, as well as to talk with you about the *GLASS ALLIANCE* series, and I know you have a new installment that is just out as of this episode's release, so we've got plenty to cover here today.

But I want to start at the beginning. I want to know more about your journey to writing fiction prior to beginning work on *DARK OF THE WEST*. At that time were you writing about topics, people, places or historical periods that were of interest to you?

Joanna Hathaway 03:22 Yeah, that's a great question and I feel like I need to start the answer by saying that I confess I was not a writer who, who planned on being published. Actually for a very long time. I, I was just writing for myself. Um, I'm certainly very thrilled and grateful to be at the point I'm at now. But it wasn't really a goal per se when I, when I first started writing, I just really enjoyed, um, writing, writing about history.

And so when you ask about the different topics, people, and places, I was exclusively, uh, writing about history and in particular World War I and World War II, I started reading nonfiction history books when I was about 13. I read my great grandfather's

memoirs of the first World War. He was a soldier in the Canadian army. And through reading his memoirs, it just made me realize that history is the story of real people and including people in my own family.

And that really got its, you know, claws into me and I just started devouring history books and you can check with my mother. She has memories of me going to library and just coming home with stacks upon stacks of history books. Um, so that, I mean I was, I was definitely a nerdy kid. I absolutely loved all of that. So I think, um, by the time I started, you know, actively thinking about, you know, finishing up a story and, and seeing where that would go. I was, I was in my mid twenties by that point. And, and that, that honestly, the first, the first book that I ever truly finished and, and wanted to kind of see where the next steps would take me was, um, it was DARK OF THE WEST.

And I, I just kinda kept working at that one and I was determined to make it be, uh, the book that I needed it to be, to, to continue on.

r.r. campbell 05:14 And when you were doing your writing initially, even before you ended up with DARK OF THE WEST, were you doing any sort of nonfiction writing about all of this history you were reading or did you kind of just get started in the realm of fiction right away?

Joanna Hathaway 05:27 Pretty much, I would say mostly dove right into fiction there. There were a few small um, contest that I entered as a teenager when I was in high school. I, you know, the Canadian Legion, you know, hosted a, uh, short story contest and an essay contest and I did a few of those actually, and one was even a poem that I wrote and so I was, I was entered into those, those sorts of things. But again, pretty much, yeah, pretty much dove right in into, into fiction. And I'm at this point in my life, think it would be really fascinating actually to look more into the nonfiction side of it. But, uh, yeah, I haven't, haven't done that yet.

r.r. campbell 06:04 Sure. And you mentioned your great grandfather's memoirs and I wondered if that is of course, part of what inspired a DARK OF THE WEST. But we can explore that again a little bit more here now in further detail or if there was another idea or a character and a or a particular scene that came to you to inspire DARK OF THE WEST. What did that really look like?

Joanna Hathaway 06:24 Yeah, there, there is one particular scene that I can remember being very distinct right around the time when I, when I started writing it, I was in my first year of university, so it was about 18 or 19. Uh, and that, that scene is still in the book. Um, now it is, it is the first meeting of these two young people. It's a fighter pilot and a princess who are on opposite sides of a, of a brewing war. Um, they're, they're from rival families and in the scene they're in a garden and he picks a flower for her and she comes back and says, well, that picking that flower is actually bad luck in this kingdom.

And I, somehow that scene came to me and I just thought, well, I want to know more about this. Why are these two young people on opposite sides and what's going on here?

And after that it gets a little hazy. I, you know, some of those early, early moments when you were first drafting, you know, it's, it's almost like a, it's like a fever dream state. You're just going and going and this, the story is just coming. Um, I mean, that's in the best scenario, doesn't always work, work that way, but when it does it, it, uh, it's almost hard to look back, you know, later on and remember exactly where did it all come from. It's, it's, it's kinda magical in a way.

So that, that's the one scene I certainly distinctly remember. Um, and I was also, it's funny to look back on these, the earlier drafts, I, I, I was looking at one of the ones from when I was 18, 19, and this was the early two thousands and I, I, uh, was very, I was struck reading it again by how on the nose, some of it was edited out over the years, but you know, reading that first draft, it's like, Hmm. Is the general who's the sort of villainous character like is, is this George W. Bush? You know, just cause I mean these were the things in the early two thousands and for those of us who, you know, were were teenagers at that time. These were the big events. And so I think I saw a lot of that, um, coming out in those early drafts too.

r.r. campbell 08:28 Well, and you mentioned it was happening in those early drafts and clearly as you mentioned, even in your author bio, that *DARK OF THE WEST* and the series to which it belongs, they are World Wars inspired. And I'm curious to know whether it was a deliberate choice to write something that was *World Wars inspired* versus something that is straight 100% historical fiction where you could have written this story about two people who happened to be present during the World Wars in our world. I guess what it comes down to here is what made you want to draw from that particular period of time and then bring it to your own world?

Joanna Hathaway 09:06 Yeah, that's a great question. First of all, I'll just say I, I loved reading about World War I. I think in particular World War II obviously is fascinating for so many reasons as well. But World War I tends to be overshadowed, I feel like, by World War II. And so a lot of, a lot of folks don't, I don't think have a very good picture of what it was exactly.

And I don't think most of us realize, you know, how influential that that war really was and, and the world really, really changed forever from the beginning of it to the, to the other side of it. So for, for, for me that was always very fascinating to, to, to follow that trail of events and realize that the things that happened in those four years still impact our world today. There are, you know, there are still conflicts and issues that are ongoing and they have their seeds and their origins in this war that was over a hundred years ago.

And we have, you know, revolutions happening and the breakup of empires, and the decline of monarchy, all of these, these big things are happening at this, at this period. So for me, that's really fascinating. That's a lot to work with, um, as a writer if, if you're, if you're translating some of that into a fictional world. So that was, that was certainly part of it. The other piece of it is, and in terms of why, why I wasn't sticking with the struggle, fiction and making it fantasy as I would say, especially when it comes to World War II, there's, there's, there's some really, you know, horrific, tough things that are happening. And I, I'm not sure that I felt I was qualified to really dive into that when, when I, when I just know that the, the people who lived through that

are still alive and it would certainly take a lot of care and consideration to, to begin to fictionalize something that really happened.

So putting it in a fantasy world, I felt just kind of, um, had gave us a little bit of separation there. And I still don't touch on, you know, I'm not bringing genocide, you know, into these, into these books. And um, it's another reason why I, I really did say I decided to start with more of a World War I feeling and go with some of the political themes of that time, which, which again is this, you know, revolution and breakup of empires and decline of monarchy and all, all those, you know, an arms race, things like that.

Um, and then, and then just bring in the technology of World War II to have the fighter planes be more like a second World War fighter planes and, and in terms of battle strategy. So I'm, I'm, I'm very cautious when I'm, when I'm quote unquote borrowing from history. I'm, I'm very conscious of the fact that there are these affected real people. And again, growing up, reading memoirs and real people drove that home for me. So yeah, I hope I say I, I start to ramble when I, when I get into talking about history. So I hope I answered both of your questions there.

r.r. campbell 11:59 You did. And your passion is very clear for these topics, and you mentioned the importance to you of being cautious when you are treating these historical subjects, particularly because you have such a deep exposure to memoir written. Of course, you know by your great grandfather and surely the countless others that you've read over the years, and though I really like the word caution, the word that resonates to me across episodes and interviews with other authors is this notion of being *deliberate* not only with our craft, of course, and the shape that our words take on the page, but the decisions that we make when we are borrowing from history or when we are borrowing from modern times, whatever the case might be, or when we are borrowing from what we think my, our future might look like.

There's this really important takeaway here that I think cannot be, it should not be understated and that is we do want to, as authors, ensure that we are being as deliberate as we possibly can in all matters.

As I'm sure you know, it's when you started writing *DARK OF THE WEST*, many years passed between writing that first scene and what the novel eventually became [published]. And so there was a lot of time for you to process for you to mature as a person for you to view history through a more refined lens, I am sure, [but] I don't want to put words in your mouth, so if you disagree, please do let me know.

But I think that there is certainly something to be said for caution and for being deliberate. And so I really appreciate that you've introduced that into this conversation.

Joanna Hathaway 13:25 You put that beautifully. Yes. Yup, exactly what you said. I appreciate you saying that and that, that very much is um, how it has been for myself, you know, over the years. And uh, I like that we're deliberate. Yes. I'm going to take that one now too.

r.r. campbell 13:40 Please do. Please take that with you. It's a deliberate and a word that I find coming up all of the time is this a judiciousness, which I guess they really kind of play off of each other, but just being judicious, being deliberate. And ensuring that we have the best interest of the story and the best interest of our readers. And in this case though, some of those readers, like you say, they could still be living and they could have experienced these things very directly and with that experience they have to, we want to be mindful of that of course.

So let's shift maybe away from necessarily their experience and talk more about your experience and how that kind of drove DARK OF THE WEST and not only the shape of the story of course based on your interest in history and the World Wars, but also neatly enough the cover of DARK OF THE WEST and that has some really neat personal Easter eggs for you in each corner of the cover, I believe. So why don't you let listeners know what are those Easter eggs, what are the symbols and why are they so important to you?

Joanna Hathaway 14:36 Yeah, yeah. I will start here by just saying a little little background on me is that when I, when I was a kid, I wanted to be two things. When I grew up, I wanted to be a pilot and I wanted to be a princess. Kind of no surprise then I think where these two main characters came from in DARK OF THE WEST. But this is, you know, again, this is when, when it's a book of the heart, it really is a reflection I think of, of the writer and, and that's really important as, as we're all, you know, working on our individual stories and thinking about what is unique to us and what we're trying to say. I, I feel like when I, when I was a teenager, you know, when, when folks realized that I had this strong interest in, in military history there, there was, there were a few eyebrows raised.

You know, they would, they were, they were fine with it, but there was always this, this, this sort of, this look in their eye like, Hmm, [why is this] nice young girl interested in the war? And, uh, I, I think that sort of, you know, to, to understand, to understand me and where I came from, I was always just this very, you know, kind of this split. There's like this divide in me. I, when I, when I went to Europe for the first time I was, I was 16 and went with my mum and we, we spent a couple of days in Paris. I wanted to do the whole shopping in Paris saying eat the, eat the pastries, do all of that. And then the rest of the trip, literally the next, you know, 10 days were spent road tripping across France and Belgium and into Germany to, to hit all of these historical battlefields from the first and second World Wars.

And I was chasing remote cemeteries and bridges and places like I had, I had a picture, I had a picture, very obscure picture from a book that I had read of a, someone in the Canadian army, you know, accepting the surrender of this German commander. And I wanted to find the specific place where this, you know, picture had been taken. And I remember my mom and I just spent like an entire afternoon, like holding up this black and white photograph to the buildings and trying to figure out if we'd found the exact spot, you know, where this had happened and uh, you know, that, uh, I, I'm blessed bless my mom cause she never once, you know, made me feel strange or odd for wanting to go on this trip. She just, she drove and uh, and she followed me along in this wild goose chase through Europe.

Um, but anyways, I, I say all that just because that gets a little more background on, I think when I went, when I got to the point where we were looking at the cover for DARK OF THE WEST, it was really important to me. Like I wanted both of these main characters who kind of represent this, these two sides of myself. I wanted that represented on the cover. I wanted readers to understand that, you know, you're getting a princess and you're getting a pilot, you're getting palace intrigue and then you're getting, you're getting combat.

And so I was really so grateful when, when my publisher presented me with this cover that they had designed and I saw all of these different elements represented, which I, I felt really did show both sides. So we do have a fighter plane on there. Um, and we do have, there's actually a little skull, um, you know, buried in this beautiful design, which I, I just kind of think is, you know, a nice way of, of weaving in just the, the war aspect and some of that, the tragedy that's in there with, with that.

Um, there's horses. I love, I was a horse girl. I've got a horse on the cover. Um, there's the, the different flowers for, for, for both nations. There's, uh, the orchid for, uh, the princess is kingdom and then chamomile for the pilot's, you know, revolutionary nation. I, they, they, they put all these little symbols in there to reflect actual, you know, points their plot points in the book. I suppose. So, yeah, I was really, really happy when I, when that's when, that's what, uh, came, came with was, was sent to my email inbox as, as the cover

[ad music swells, ad begins]

r.r. campbell 18:38 This episode is brought to you by Dandelion Web Marketing. Dandelion Web Marketing helps writers and authors thrive online.

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[ad music swells, fades, ad ends]

r.r. campbell 19:16 And it really is a gorgeous cover. So they nailed it on that front. And I think to some extent it would have been hard for them to not bring so much of you to the cover as well because, as we've been saying, this is a manuscript and now a novel that was driven so much by your interests and by the things that are important to you. And it was written in this cautious but very deliberate manner. And so as an extension of that, I think we can see how we get that really nice synergy between the words on the page and the content on the front cover.

And to your point about having traveled across Europe and having done what ultimately proved to be some surely really incredible research that helped inform the shape that DARK OF THE WEST has ultimately taken and surely now STORM FROM THE EAST as well, it reminds me of my own journey as of late as an author because I

am coming to this episode of the podcast in particular as someone who's published fiction are in the realms of science fiction in a speculative near future with internet access brain implants, and as someone who has written a contemporary fiction novel about an adult film star turned accountant.

And for both the speculative series and for this contemporary fiction piece, I had to do a lot of research, but none of it was about something that I personally had done in my own life. And so I felt always as though there has been a little bit of distance that exists between me and between the pages, and, to some extent as an extension thereof, the characters. But my latest project takes place on a cranberry farm in Northern Wisconsin where I have spent a lot of time and where I spent a lot of time when I was a kid on vacations.

And what I have found is that writing about a place that I have been and being able to really recall the sensory details, being able to recall memories that I have of these places and look at photographs, kind of like I'm sure you have done with your own travels and how *DARK OF THE WEST* has taken shape. For me as a writer, that has been a really healing process and it has helped me feel as though I'm bringing an authenticity of the page that you can really feel when you're reading something like *DARK OF THE WEST*. And so for any listeners out there who are writing about something they know or they're writing about something that they don't, I think that what I would want to share is that both are valid.

But I think that if you're ever feeling as though you're not quite in the right place, take it back to something you know, and just set a story that maybe you thought needed to take place in space, for example, put it someplace that you have visited and some place that is important to you. And I think that could be a really effective exercise in helping one better understand what it is that we can bring to the page in terms of authenticity.

Joanna Hathaway 21:54 Absolutely. And you know, and even if the career choice of your characters are, the things that they're going through are not something you've personally experienced. I'm sure, and you can tell me, um, how it was for you, Ryan, but I'm sure you still in those characters, they were, maybe you were bringing to them certain inner conflicts that were something that you could maybe relate to a little bit more in that, you know, in, in, in those characters, even if the external things were clearly much different, not quite as personal. Do you find that that, that you did that at all with, with those that those earlier books?

r.r. campbell 22:25 I did in fact, and in both specifically with those internal conflicts, because you're very right. The internal often comes from that sort of well of who we are as a person. I know that with Robin in *ACCOUNTING FOR IT ALL*, she's the adult film star turned accountant. I don't share any overlap in career choice with her as it turns out, but one thing that she struggles with is this challenge that she has to self actualize and become the best version of herself that she possibly can. And a lot of what I wrote in that book were about to some extent my own struggles in my twenties to become my best me and to try and figure out who it is that I really am and the people that I want to associate with and the kind of relationship that I want to have to myself and to the people who are closest to me.

And then over in the EMPATHY series, we have Chandra who is an art school dropout. I am not an artist in the way that Chandra is an artist, but her relationship to her work and her relationship to her anxieties as a person and specifically the anxiety that just kind of lingers over her all the time turned out to be something that I explored in really great detail in the second book in the series that being morning dove. And that was a huge reflection of some of the struggles that I was having as I was writing morning dub in particular. And I find that when I revisit those aspects of those characters, I can really channel that and it feels, again, very healing. Uh, and that's not to say that all writing needs to be about a healing process. It can be about self-discovery, it can be about just telling a funny tale. But for me it was really nice to see those internal struggles play out and know, Hey, that's a little bit of me on the page. Even if I don't share 100% of what it is that these characters do on a day to day basis, for example.

Joanna Hathaway 24:11 That's great.

r.r. campbell 24:12 And now I want to congratulate you of course on the release of STORM FROM THE EAST. And we were just talking a couple of minutes ago here about the cover for DARK OF THE WEST. I'm wondering if this second installment in the GLASS ALLIANCE series contains any similarly personal symbolism as does the cover for DARK OF THE WEST?

Joanna Hathaway 24:32 Yes, it does. Uh, I was really excited with the, with the second cover because, uh, I was allowed to have a little more military tech on the front. You'll notice there's a tank in the corner. Now we've got two airplanes. So I was, I was excited, you know, I think, I think by the time we reached the second book, uh, my publisher was, was, was ready to lean a little more into the whole idea of, of a military fantasy. Um, for YA, there's not, there's not many books I think and why that would fall into that category, but it's pretty niche. But I, I would say it's, it's, it's been getting such a great reaction from younger readers. I love when they reach out to usually on Instagram and send me messages when they finished it.

And I've got all these, you know, wonderful, brilliant girls who, you know, are studying to become engineers or want to be pilots and want to do all these, these things. And um, they really appreciate like, they, like they're there. I guess we are kindred spirits because they appreciate the, the, the princess pilot, uh, you know, dynamic that's going on.

And so, um, it's definitely exciting to see the book finding, finding its readers. And so now on this, this second book cover we do, I think if you look at it, you, you again get, get a real sense that this is, this is not just a fantasy in a palace. You know, with the princess we've got, we've got, we've got a tank right there on the governor, World War II tank and there are some other symbols on there that are very specific to the story. In the second book in STORM FROM THE EAST, there are a set of dog tags woven in. Um, identity is a big theme in the second book, but both main characters are, are learning more about their families and, and these secrets in the past that are coming to light.

And in particular if you've read DARK OF THE WEST, you know that the pilot has been undercover the entire book. So his love interest, the princess, doesn't actually know

his true identity. So that's kind of hanging over the whole story as is how is that gonna what's gonna happen when that truth is revealed? So yeah, there's definitely, uh, each, each, each little item on that cover. I don't want to give away too much because again, you know, don't want to spoil the second book or the first book for those who haven't read it, there's a motorcycle because those are romantic motorcycle ride. Of course there has to be.

r.r. campbell 26:56 Well and I really think that it makes a lot of sense that they would be embracing the military fantasy side of this book a little bit more in the cover because for folks who have read the first book as I have, we know that there is a building toward increased military conflict and I'm sure that that comes into the fore much more significantly in the second book. At least if I had to guess, I have the book on order. I haven't received it yet, but I'm sure that by the time this airs I will already be devouring it. So I do want to know personally and for listeners as well a little bit more about *STORM FROM THE EAST* specifically as it pertains to how writing this installment compared to writing *DARK OF THE WEST*.

Joanna Hathaway 27:37 Well, you're absolutely right. There's definitely more war. That's a good hunch. Um, but you know, if, if you've read the prologue of *DARK OF THE WEST*, I guess it is sort of a, um, it's a known that that things might, aren't really going to, they're going to go a little worse before they get better. Maybe. So the war is coming. Uh, it was, it's interesting it is different to, to write a sequel when you have readers now reading the first book and while I didn't know, you know, what the second book would be, you know, I had to plot it out long before I wrote it. I will say it was a lot more pressure in some ways just because now it's not just me invested in this story. I've got readers who have very, you know, strong opinions now about certain characters and what they want to see happen in a sequel.

So of course ultimately I have to be true to my vision and that that's how I write. I write for myself, but I'm also, I don't just forget my readers either. I am, I am thinking about them and knowing that this is kind of a shared journey at this point which makes it really special and actually makes it, you know, a lot of fun. So yes there's pressure but uh, but it was it. It's a different kind of experience and I don't know if you've, if you found that as, as you've written multiple books, how do you find that once you've, once you've got a readership who you know will be picking up your books.

r.r. campbell 29:01 That is, I approach it in a very similar way and what was coming through to me in your response to this question was again this idea of being deliberate, you're considering what it is you know readers might be after, but you're also writing for yourself. And for folks who are listening to this podcast, if you want to do a really deep dive into how it is that we navigate reader expectations, there is an episode of *Novel Approaches* that is also on the Writescast Network that will have debuted a couple of weeks before this episode featuring you, Joanna, and that is [Novel Approaches episode 22 on tropes and clichés](#) and what it is that they create for reader expectations because readers have a particular genre, well, they want to read that genre and those genres are often defined by their tropes. So how is it that we navigate this complicated series of reader expectations and what it is that we want to bring to the page?

Well, we've got an hour long conversation over in that episode between me and Maggie Derrick, who like you, Jo, has had to do something similar with her STARBORN series and she talks for a few minutes in that episode about what it means to be publishing a novel as a serial novel and to have these new installments out every week where, on a platform like Wattpad, she is getting feedback from readers on a daily basis.

I, it's a very back and forth process and she said things very similar to you. Those being, well, she knows where the story is going, but every once in a while she might choose to keep a character in the fore or push another character to the back a little bit more depending on how readers are feeling about them, but ultimately it's going to be the same story because again, she is being judicious. She is being deliberate just as you are being judicious and deliberate in your storytelling as well.

Joanna Hathaway 30:47 Yeah, I love that. I'll have to listen to that one. I like the sound of that.

r.r. campbell 30:50 Yeah, that one will be out on January 24th so by the time this episode is out, it'll have been out for a month. So you and I, Jo, we're living in the past as of this recording, so we'll have to wait another a week or so here, but listeners, by the time you hear this, you can check it out over at writescast.net or you can subscribe wherever you listen to podcasts and look for Novel Approaches episode 22.

All right, let's turn it back to you. Now. Again, Joanna, did you know from the start that you would be writing a trilogy and whether or not you did, how did that shape your approach to the page as you wrote DARK OF THE WEST and then now STORM FROM THE EAST?

Joanna Hathaway 31:28 I'm not sure that I knew exactly how many books it would end up. I, to be perfectly honest, when I started writing it as a late teen, early twenties, I was, I really just envisioned like WAR AND PEACE, you know, like just one massive book. Of course, we don't really have books like that. We don't really put books like that out there anymore really too often. So, uh, of course it had to be broken up into individual installments. And of course that, you know, as it, when I was a younger writer learning craft that was a great learning curve for me was, okay, if this needs to be broken down, how do we turn each book into its own book, its own story with a beginning and middle and end and a good arc, um, while also always keeping in mind that they have to be these, these arcs that span the entire series as well for each character and for the, the events they put, political events and everything else that's going on.

So sometimes it is a little bit like herding cats and there's a lot going on. But I have always had, you know, the ending in mind, I, I personally kind of, I need to know what I'm working towards and everyone's different and there's certainly folks out there who, who don't like, they'll embark on a series not really knowing where it's going to take them. And that's fine. And then there's, I know others who, who plot out every single page before they begin. Uh, I'm, I'm certainly somewhere in the middle. Like, like I said, I, I have always known the, the larger events and where I wanted the story to go at the, at it's ending point. But I do allow myself to sort of daydream through

my first drafts. I let my, let my characters show me a little more about what they want. Sometimes they surprise me. They are kind of like their own, their own people. It's so strange to talk about it with like, I mean mostly writers are listening to this, I'm assuming, so you all get it. But uh, for other people it's a little strange to try to explain how that, how that happens, but it they, they really do show you, um, what they're fighting for. So I, I do leave room for them to surprise me as I'm, as I'm drafting each book.

[ad music swells, ad begins]

r.r. campbell 33:36 This episode is brought to you by Audible. Audible offers an unmatched selection of audio books and other audio based entertainment, including titles from your favorite authors like Joanna Hathaway.

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[ad music swells, fades, ad ends]

r.r. campbell 34:43 and you mentioned that it is mostly writers who listen to this show and I would say that that is most certainly the case because we actually have a voicemail for you from someone who gave us a call at area code (608) 284-8342 and they wanted to know a little bit more about your process. So I'm going to go ahead and play that voicemail for you now and then we will get your reaction in just a moment.

Amber (Caller) 35:09 Good afternoon. This is Amber Boudreau and I'm calling with a question for Joanna Hathaway. Um, I was wondering at what point in the process she might utilize beta readers or critique partners and um, sort of what kind of guidance she gives them for what she's expecting to get out of having them read her, her work. Um, thank you very much. Bye bye.

r.r. campbell 35:37 All right, so we had a question there from Amber Boudreau. Thank you very much, Amber. We appreciate your call at area code is (608) 284-8342.

And, Joanna, wondering about at what point in the process you use beta readers or critique partners and then when you do, what kind of expectations do you or do you not set for them in terms of the feedback you are looking for?

Joanna Hathaway 36:00 That is a wonderful question and it's one that I kind of have, has evolved a bit over time and in terms of how I've used my, my beta readers or my critique partners. So I would say at this point for myself where I feel like I have learned over trying, trying this different ways with different drafts of different stories. I am a firm believer now in, in not sharing my work until I've done at least the first draft, which for me takes a long time so it can get a little, little lonely.

But I, I find that I, I don't want to compromise on that first draft. I don't want other influence, you know, coming in and, um, potentially altering the vision that I'm, that I'm having for the story. And I know that there's such a massive amount of editing that goes on anyways after a first draft. For sure. A lot of things will most likely be changing. But with that first draft, I just want to, I want to get the foundation down. I want to know who my characters are. I want to know what they're fighting for. I want to know how this world looks and works, especially if it's, if it's fantasy, um, before, before I start getting feedback. So that's how I, how I do that now. And then I do send, I do send that, you know, once I have a draft that I'm, that I'm happy with that I've edited myself and, and that's the other, the other downside is the more you write, the more picky you get with your own work.

So I'm sort of self editing a lot more now as I go, which also slows things down. I'm still working on that. But once, once they have, once I've sent that out, I actually don't usually give, initially I don't give any specific questions. I, I have a great little crew of, of readers and critique partners who have been with me for many years and I know how they, I know they get who I am as a writer, so I don't really feel like I need to explain too much when I, when I send it to them, they're also brutally honest and that's why I keep them around. They are not afraid to tell me what I need to hear. So I let them read and then I let them tell me their thoughts. You know, they're, they're usually, they're also writers as well. And so they're great at, um, they don't really need questions.

They will just send me an essay after they've read it about all the things that were, were that worked for them and what, what didn't work at that point. That's when I do have some usually some more specific questions that I can begin to, uh, kinda geared towards the feedback they've given me. So, um, you know, I can ask for specifics, you know, why did this character make you feel this way? Um, was a particular subplot, too confusing, what make, what would bring more clarity to that for you? So we can, we can drill down into more specifics then, but I, uh, I do like to keep, I do like to keep it relatively open-ended, at least at least to start with.

r.r. campbell 38:45 Yeah. That's actually an approach that I think I will be adopting going forward after hearing you explain it. Because historically when I have worked with beta readers, I am the kind of person who will not ask them specifically in advance, like, Hey, I'm going to be curious about this scene in which X, Y, Z happens. It's very, please let me know if there are any scenes that you found to be confusing or that dragged on, et cetera. And I think that that is probably spoiling the pot a little bit, so to speak. It's kind of me preparing them or letting them know that I am worried about a scenario. And if they're looking for it, well, then they're probably more likely to actually flag that or something like that. So I do like that approach of being very open and letting beta readers, letting critique partners see what it is they

have to say and then issuing those follow-ups because that seems like a, having a dynamic process is probably really the way to go if we can swing that. So thank you for that insight. And thank you for, uh, getting me thinking a little bit differently about how I'm going to work with my own betas going forward.

Joanna Hathaway 39:51 Absolutely. Yeah. And what you just said there is, is, is also so true. And I actually was going to say that and I forgot to do that, but it's, I'm glad you brought that up. But yes, putting ideas in your beta's minds ahead of time. You don't want to, yeah, you don't want to skew them towards that. You want everything to be a fresh, honest, you know, cause there might be something that you don't like and it turns out they love it. Like it's working really well for them. So you want to get that honesty as well, even on the good stuff. And then you can, then you can bring up your concerns and then usually they're pretty good about saying, Oh, you know, well if you're, if you're worried about this, what about, what would this push you closer to that you know, what you're trying to say and what you're trying to accomplish with this particular character or this scene.

r.r. campbell 40:32 And it is nice too to let beta readers have that freedom to say not only maybe what it is that they like that you were nervous about, but I actually had the opposite phenomenon occur with another manuscript I gave some betas in late 2019, and that was for this historical fantasy that I had set in 1870 Arizona Territory. But rather than have our traditional beasts of burden, all of them were replaced with dinosaurs. And so it was meant to be this sort of lighthearted adventure in a speculative world that aside from the beasts of burden was just 1870 Arizona Territory.

And I had this character who was sort of a, uh, a peddler of wares, you know, he was real, a true traditional snake oil salesman going around and he was from Prussia and I thought he was the funniest thing. I thought he was going to be this really nice comic relief for readers. And unanimously, and my beta readers don't know each other, they're of different backgrounds, I know they didn't collaborate, [but] unanimously, every beta reader hated this guy so much and it was just a very interesting response to get from them because here I thought, well, he's just kind of in the background and he's keeping things light, but it turns out, uh, I'm going to have some serious revising to do for that manuscript because he was so load some that had actually had people wanting to walk away from the story.

So, you know, don't spoil the pot and don't say, Hey, don't you think that, uh, this particular character is funny because then they might not let you know that they did not find him funny.

Joanna Hathaway 42:01 Yes, exactly. And I think, um, yeah, you have to look at that. It's like, if I, I completely agree with that, that method and that's why I like to have multiple readers. You know, I don't just have one or two. I have about, I have frightened. I have four, um, that I, you know, will use for everything I think that I ever write as long as they're willing, willing to read it. Um, plus, you know, a plus an agent and an editor as well on top of that. And uh, you know, if, if you're finding that, I would say like over 50% of them are really on, on the same page, either loving something or not, not loving something. Uh, that's, that's the moment when I, when I, when I would want to listen to that and look at, you know, sometimes there's a way

you can can fix that. You can maybe use some course correction and, and make that character come off a little better the way you're hoping. Uh, but then it's when you get to that, you know, when, when they're divided, when it's half and half, that's always, that's the toughest, toughest thing, right? Because then, then it's really up to you as, as the author, what do you, what do you really want to do? And with this particular, um, controversial character or plot decision, I've had a few of those

r.r. campbell 43:10 Right. It all comes down then to two. What is your vision? And that is why knowing who you are as a writer and knowing what it is you want to do with your story and especially if you're someone like you who's writing about something that you're very knowledgeable about and that you care about deeply, I think then you kind of have this sort of, it's the lighthouse that you can always kind of look for through the fog and then bring your boat to port in that space, whatever the case might be. So there we are again having a vision and knowing what it is you want to write. It all comes back to that to some extent.

Joanna Hathaway 43:42 Absolutely.

r.r. campbell 43:43 And we have one other quote unquote question here from someone who called our voicemail number at (608) 284-8342. So without a further framing of this one, I'm just going to play it for you and then we will get a reaction. So here we go with this other listener voicemail.

Anonymous (Caller) 44:03 Joanna! When are you going to come to BC and we can find that plane crash and we're going to have wine and you can just visit me. And we talk about history. Anyway, love you.

r.r. campbell 44:17 All right. So there we have a voicemail, not with a specific writerly question, that sounds like it may have been a fan or a reader, but we do appreciate those calls of support. So thank you to them. I guess the question they did in there was, when are you going to go to BC, Joanna?

Joanna Hathaway 44:38 [laughing] Oh, I'm, I'm chuckling over this one. I love that. Thank you. To the person who called in. Um, you'll, for those who are listening, you'll notice she, she knew, she knows how to lure me. She mentioned an airplane and wine. So I mean, obviously I think I need to go now. Uh, I, I really do hope that I can get to the West coast of Canada.

Um, for those, for those who don't know, I am, I'm Canadian and I'm American. Now. I'm a dual citizen, but I'm originally from Canada and I am able to get home, you know, to do events in Ontario fairly regularly. But I have not gone to the West coast yet and I would absolutely love that. So if anyone's listening in in your Canadian over on the West coast, I promise I will work on making that happen. And I absolutely would love to go hiking to see an airplane crash and drink wine with you guys.

r.r. campbell 45:29 That sounds like a really nice day regardless of whether you're someone who's super into aviation or not. And I will say thank you to the new podcasting platform we've switched over to, I now know that we do in fact have listeners in Vancouver and in BC in general. So everyone who's listening now, you know there's, there could be an author in your area soon and it sounds like it's going

to be a day full of aviation-related adventures and wine, but we of course don't want to be having the wine before the aviation-related adventures. That sounds like a bad, bad [inaduble]. So thank you very much to that caller, uh, that anonymous caller.

Thank you very much, Joanna, for joining me for this conversation. Before I let you go, I do want to know where is it that listeners to this show can find you online.

Joanna Hathaway 46:16 Yeah, I, I personally love Instagram. That is, that is the place I hang out. So I love it when, when readers find me on there or other writers and just want to chat and, and reach out. I'm very friendly. Um, so please come. Please do come and say hi on there. I do have a website also, um, which is [joannachathaway.com](http://joannachathaway.com). Um, someone took Joanna Hathaway. So personally I had to get a little creative there.

r.r. campbell 46:30 That rascal.

Joanna Hathaway 46:32 Yes, I know. I don't know who they are. Yeah, no, I, I do have a, an event page on my website that I update, uh, as the events happen. And so with, with *STORM FROM THE EAST*, I know when by the time we released this, um, the launch would probably be passed, but there are upcoming events as well, both in Canada and in the US, um, I'm working on those now.

So if you go to that events page, you will see, uh, where those will be. And I also just want to point out if anyone has, if anyone has read *DARK OF THE WEST* and has pre-ordered *STORM FROM THE EAST*, there is a preorder campaign right now and it's anyone can kind of enter, uh, from around the world. It's all digital content, but I'll be sending out bonus bonus scenes from *DARK OF THE WEST* and also an a grand prize entry for an annotated copy of *DARK OF THE WEST*, which also has beautiful artwork in it too. Not done by myself cause I cannot draw but I listed the help with someone who's very talented and so that those are out there too. And if you go to my website you will see that as well.

r.r. campbell 47:45 Very good. And then also just so folks can find you on Instagram, I believe you are over there. Your handle is @spitfirewriter.

Joanna Hathaway 47:52 That's correct. It certainly is spitfire. My favorite World War II aircraft. So yep.

r.r. campbell 47:59 There you have it. We're bringing it all the way back to aviation and to writing, the things that you care about deeply. So thank you very much Joanna Hathaway for joining me for this episode of the r.r. campbell writescast here on the Writescast Network.

Joanna Hathaway 48:13 Thank you so much, Ryan. This has been an absolute blast. I really, I'm very honored to have been invited. It was great to meet you, you know, last spring, and best of best of luck with all your writing as well. It's nice to have someone else on this journey. Friends or friends who can relate to this.

r.r. campbell 48:27 Yeah, thank you and best of luck to you and I can't wait to start reading *STORM FROM THE EAST*. Thanks again.

Joanna Hathaway 48: 32 Thank you.

[outro music swells, fades, plays in background]

r.r. campbell 48:38 And so concludes my interview of Joanna Hathaway, author of **DARK OF THE WEST** and **STORM FROM THE EAST**. Thanks to Joanna for joining me and thanks to you, dear listeners for tuning in. If you enjoyed this episode, I'd love it if you could leave the Writescast Network a rating and review on Apple Podcasts or wherever you listen to podcasts. This will help the Writescast Network reach more writers like you, and building that sense of community is what w, and I hope you, are all about.

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Coming up next on the Writescast Network is an episode featuring Laurie Buchanan, the author of **THE BUSINESS OF BEING**. She'll join me for a conversation about the business of being an author. Laurie's episode will debut on Apple Podcasts, [writescast.net](https://writescast.net), and wherever you listen to podcasts on March 6<sup>th</sup>.

Until then you can stay in touch with us by visiting [writescast.net](https://writescast.net) or by saying hello on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram at @writescast or by searching for the Writescast Network.

We're also available by email at [writescast@gmail.com](mailto:writescast@gmail.com) and you can now call us at area code (608) 284-8342, where you can leave a voicemail with questions for future guests or other matters you'd like us to address in future programming. Again, that number is (608) 284-8342.

To reach me personally, you can visit [rrcampbellwritescast.com](https://rrcampbellwritescast.com) or holler at me on Twitter where I can be found as @iamrrcampbell. I love hearing from listeners of all backgrounds, so please don't hesitate to reach out.

Thanks again for listening. Until next time, this is r.r. campbell signing off. Write on and write well.



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[music fades, episode ends]