

Consultation Transcript

This transcript is of a 2 hour consultation I had with Mirath. Mirath is a writer of intermediate confidence who had started to experience writer's block. The goal of this consultation was to trace the reason for his writer's block and to help him start writing again.

>The Character Consultancy, 14:14

So, what projects have you go on the go at the moment? To the best of my knowledge you've got the main loC story, Daniel's No Frills ready to go ahead at some unspecified point, and at least one vampire bat story. Anything else?

>Mirath, 14:18

I've got ongoing bat TF sessions with EB to strengthen it - and for us to have a bit of fun with. (New commissions to look over, but I've paid the artists) My friend might take me up on a story request, so we shall see. I think that's it?

>The Character Consultancy, 14:18

Okay, so you've got quite a lot of things going on there at the moment. If you were to rate each out of 5 stars in terms of which you are the most enthusiastic about writing right now, how would you grade them?

Here's a ready-made list:

loC core story

Daniel's No Frills

TF based stories with EB

New commissions with artists

Your friend's story request

>Mirath, 14:23

TF-based stories - *mostly because most relevant to my situation* Daniel's No Frills - *even if I have nothing on the guy* loC core story - *middle because it's so on/off motivation, yet I'm proud of the thing I made* New commissions - *lower because the majority of work is done, all paid off* Friend's story request - *May or may not even happen*

>The Character Consultancy, 14:25

Right, okay! So you have a personal investment in thinking about the TF stories. They are personally relevant to you. You are aware that they offer you insights into your situation so it's only natural that you will be thinking about these a lot.

You have 24 hours in your day (minus sleeping, eating, attending to other things like work, etc.) That means you have a finite amount of time to spend on thinking about your creative life, so the more time you spend thinking about one thread, the less time is left for you to think about other threads.

>Mirath, 14:26

I think it's been a while since I've written fantasy too, maybe that's what I've been missing

>The Character Consultancy, 14:26

Do the TF ones include fantasy? (maybe that's a stupid question; of course they do, but I mean fantasy in the sense that you're thinking of).

>Mirath, 14:27

In a way? There's no magic or anything outside of hypnosis, but it's a more non-human aspect to it

>The Character Consultancy, 14:28

Understood. How are you finding working with that level of fantasy? Are you very used to writing something like that or is it challenging to you?

>Mirath, 14:29

I used to do it a lot when I was younger, I once wrote a very very long story that was purely fantasy - over 400 pages long. That, was a run-on one, strictly point A to point B and no prior planning

I don't have it any more, sadly

>The Character Consultancy, 14:29

400 pages is very impressive indeed! I'm sorry to hear you don't have that any more.

It sounds like you're comfortable writing fantasy to the level that you're working on for EB's sake.

>Mirath, 14:31

Mm, it feels like I don't have to try as hard

>The Character Consultancy, 14:31

So that story's not a challenge from a technical perspective.

Which means you have the mental energy left over to focus on other things. Partly the stuff you're learning with EB that's relevant to your situation, but also you're still looking at your other projects

It sounds like you're going to be eagerly working on that EB story for a while, and that you need to for your own emotional well-being. Before we move on I just want to say: don't give yourself a hard time over the other stories and works. You're writing the EB story as an act of self-care and that's not to be underestimated.

In counselling we generally have an ongoing issue with clients. A client who first comes to us gets the most benefit from working with us but over time many experience diminishing returns because the worst of their presenting issues have been cleared up (actually, that's an over-simplification but it's broadly true). I think you might find the same with working with EB: you're getting your richest learning right now and that might reduce as time goes on.

At some point you'll feel as if you've learned enough from your dealings with him (at least for the time being) and be able to focus on other things again.

Does that sound about right to you?

>Mirath, 14:36

It makes a lot of sense, yeah

>The Character Consultancy, 14:37

And I'll bet that after you've taken your focus off EB for a while you'll want to go back - that's the thing about rich learning, that you'll soon find that you have a lot to incorporate into your life. Lots to try out, experiment with to see how it turns out, and a lot to allow to settle.

That's an important state to be in and to give its proper time.

>Mirath, 14:38

Oh yeah it's more just practising on my own too, to get into that mindset myself since I respond to him real quick

>The Character Consultancy, 14:38

Well then! You're in communion with a good teacher. No wonder that's where your attention is!

You know what my favourite fairytale is? Sleeping Beauty. And this is why: it highlights the importance of the time we spend in a dormant state. For a while, Sleeping Beauty is 'dead' - except, we know she isn't because she later wakes up. That sleeping state she goes into isn't permanent and is just a state she's temporarily in.

Aside from this she goes to sleep a girl (fully grown maybe, but she's a dependant in a house where someone else is head of the household, and she is only really able to help out by doing household chores) but when she wakes up she's a woman (with a partner who has come for her, and with whom she is ready to elope).

Never underestimate the power of dormancy.

>Mirath, 14:41

Huh, I never really thought of it that way before

>The Character Consultancy, 14:41

What are your initial thoughts about it?

>Mirath, 14:42

I think you've got a point about it being a temporary, yet sometimes necessary, state

>The Character Consultancy, 14:43

Meditate on that maybe. It's vital for us all. Especially humans.

We live in a culture that disregards dormant stages. Maybe it's because we work with computers so much; computers can work pretty much without interruption and give you the same results whether it's 3pm or 3am. Humans aren't built like that. Human brains function by having peaks and troughs, and that's how it should be.

Those can be over the space of minutes, hours, days, weeks, and even months, depending on what is being processed.

So give yourself a free pass over the fact that you're processing one thing and not another, 'kay?

>Mirath, 14:45

Yeah, I think it could be worse

>The Character Consultancy, 14:46

It could absolutely be. You're still entitled to find it frustrating - absolutely so, you've worked hard to get to the point you're at in your life, so why would you want anything in your life to stop? You're good at working up momentum - I've seen you do it with a handful of projects! But it must while you rest.

>Mirath, 14:49

It's just been like that for months now, that's the only thing

>The Character Consultancy, 14:49

Has it? We were only working on loC a few weeks ago

>Mirath, 14:49

Has it? It feels like it

>The Character Consultancy, 14:49

Or do you mean for a different side of yourself?

>Mirath, 14:50

It just feels like I've been stuck for a long long time

>The Character Consultancy, 14:50

Can you tell me more about that?

>Mirath, 14:51

It just feels like, every time I've tried to go back to it, it's like I can't see how I'd continue, or how I'd make things fit into the spaces I seem to have made

>The Character Consultancy, 14:51

For loC?

>Mirath, 14:51

Yeah

>The Character Consultancy, 14:53

Well, before we look at anything else, I think it's worth recognising that it has only been 3 or 4 weeks. Since then you have had other things happening: a mental/emotional slump, and a strong reinvigoration as you got to know EB.

>Mirath, 14:54

I still can't believe it's only been 3 or 4 weeks. Damn
It seriously feels longer

>The Character Consultancy, 14:54

It seems a long time when it's frustrating, I think.

>Mirath, 14:54

It feels like I've been stuck for ages
Yeah

>The Character Consultancy, 14:54

I don't want to devalue what you're experiencing at all, but I think that reality-checking how long it's been can be helpful.
But on a more practical level, what spaces do you currently see in IoC?

>Mirath, 14:56

It's quite literally the gaps I've made, or the choppy parts where I've written a few scenes that don't link up because *maybe* I'll think of a filler later
Like how I can get the main points across

>The Character Consultancy, 14:56

Can you give me an example?

>Mirath, 15:02

Even though the chapters are unfinished, they still jump from idea to idea. Take chapter 12, where it starts off with the end of that KilTech meeting, and even though I've spread it out it just feels so choppy because I haven't gone from point A to B, but instead mainly/only worked out the dialogue

>The Character Consultancy, 15:03

Aha, so this is *way* ahead of what you've actually written!

>Mirath, 15:03

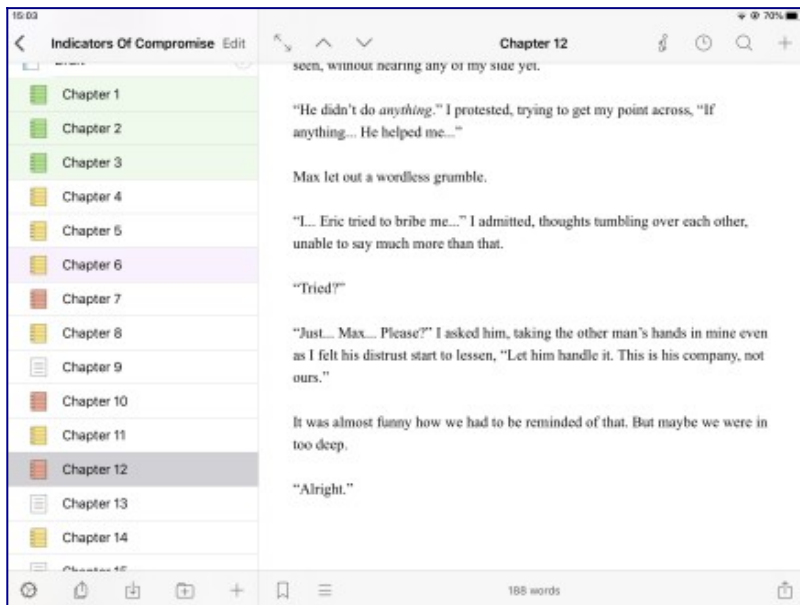
Yes, 188 words is *nothing* and hardly started. But it's now more the fact even between some chapters which should link up, don't

>The Character Consultancy, 15:03

Have you tried writing that part of the story? Is that the 188 words?

>Mirath, 15:04

Best to show what I mean: Green is complete to satisfaction, Yellow is over 1,000 words, Red is started



>The Character Consultancy, 15:05

Oh, I can see what you're doing here!

Yep, this is something writers get everywhere.

So! You're writing parts that your green bits haven't yet reached because you can visualise them clearly, am I right?

>Mirath, 15:05

Yeah

>The Character Consultancy, 15:06

And in theory, it should all match up. Except that you're not sure of little details - ways the conversations have turned, or whether the next green part will veer in a slightly different way that might become unrecoverable by the time you get to chapter 12, that kind of thing?

>Mirath, 15:06

Yeah!

>The Character Consultancy, 15:09

Here's the thing: there's every chance that the story will veer in the meantime, but let it veer. It'll do that because that's what stories do. When you write them thoroughly as you have for the first 3 chapters, you uncover things (like bits of characterisation, or extra details you throw in but didn't realise would be there to start with).

You've put a stake in the ground to show yourself what you want that little bit in chapter 12 to look like, but now you just go back to chapter 4 and start working from there.

If you visualise any other bits (and it looks like you already have) then write little 200ish word bits of those too (again, it looks like you already have). *But don't be too possessive about them.* You may very well need to rewrite them when you get to them. Maybe subtly, maybe to a strong degree, but by the time the green segment of your story catches up with that part you'll know what to write.

>Mirath, 15:11

I think that's my problem, I've gotten a bit too possessive over them. Like IoC Christmas was a better write, maybe because I just let that go from start to finish

>The Character Consultancy, 15:12

And why wouldn't you be? These are your characters, perhaps even your emotional processes that you're going through by writing these. You're not writing IoC because you're indifferent about the events of the story, after all.

It belongs to you and is precious to you, so of course you don't want to give any of it up.

>Mirath, 15:13

Indeed so

>The Character Consultancy, 15:14

And yet, that's part of the compromise, and it's one that maybe you weren't expecting because it's all within you. How can we be at odds with ourselves?

You both want a specific outcome to this story and you want your boys to have free rein to grow. You're almost like a parent in that way. What parent wants to see their kids get hurt, or lose their way?

Most parents want to see their kids become happy and successful, but most of us know what happens to the child whose life is overly controlled.

>Mirath, 15:15

Yeah, it's quite a fine line to go along

>The Character Consultancy, 15:16

Mm hmm. Purely out of interest, which would you go for if you had a kid? Let them do their own thing and make their own mistakes, or train them towards being successful?

*Your idea of successful, I should add?

>Mirath, 15:17

Hmm... probably let them make their own mistakes, much as I was, not overly controlled

>The Character Consultancy, 15:17

That's nice - let them blossom in their own way, right?

>Mirath, 15:17

Yeah, exactly

That and it's really stifling to be controlled like that

>The Character Consultancy, 15:19

Isn't it just? Isn't. It. Just.

So since Max, Kay and all of the others are part you, could you be resisting being trained along that specific route to that particular outcome?

>Mirath, 15:19

Ah that's a good point, it's possible

>The Character Consultancy, 15:21

Could Eric also be putting the brakes on things?

You don't like Eric (with good reason), and he's a part of the story. Could you be avoiding writing any more of him?

>Mirath, 15:21

laughs in breaking fourth wall

Possibly

I can't think of an answer I made myself laugh

>The Character Consultancy, 15:21

Glad you did!

You don't have to give an answer. Maybe it's something to think about though

>Mirath, 15:22

I also think it's because I don't have a lot of experience in that sort of field either

So I can't rely on that sort of thing

>The Character Consultancy, 15:23

Which field is that?

>Mirath, 15:23

Auditing

>The Character Consultancy, 15:23

Oh! And here I was all this time thinking that you were drawing on previous work experience or something!

>Mirath, 15:24

No, I've never been an auditor. Sure I work in a high security area, but that's about it

>The Character Consultancy, 15:24

Let me see... have you considered research? More specifically, asking questions on Reddit, the Worldbuilding Stack Exchange, or NaNoWriMo? All 3 of those are good sources of information on just about any subject you can imagine.

Want links?

>Mirath, 15:25

I found a few links where it's been written by an auditor, but thank you

>The Character Consultancy, 15:25

No worries.

How are you feeling about progressing with IoC at this point?

>Mirath, 15:27

A little bit better. I just wonder if I need to make my second copy and just let that run from A to B

>The Character Consultancy, 15:28

That sounds like a good idea.

How about your other projects? I admit that I'd been surprised recently about the whole Daniel thing - you've seemed so enthusiastic about him that I'd have guessed that you'd want a No Frills of him in double quick time, but now that you've told me how you feel about IoC it makes sense that you've put him on the back burner.

Especially with you putting your time and resources into working with EB.

>Mirath, 15:30

I have no idea how I'd even go into his background anyway

>The Character Consultancy, 15:32

That's okay - you've got me!

I guess you already know how No Frills work - we start by looking at a character's earliest childhood. Would you say that you simply don't have any story about him as a little'un because he's so much an adult in your mind?

He's a figure of lust so you have no reason to see him as a child, and because of that, you're having difficulty knowing where to start. Would that be something like it?

>Mirath, 15:35

There is that, and then even though he's a bigger character, it's still Kay and Max that have the spotlight, so to speak

>The Character Consultancy, 15:35

They do.

Ah! Yes!

So I don't think you write from his POV at any point, do you?

>Mirath, 15:36

Not at all

>The Character Consultancy, 15:36

I know you haven't written from his perspective partly because you've still got so much of loC to write, but would it be fair to say that you're unlikely to?

>Mirath, 15:36

I had no plans to at all

>The Character Consultancy, 15:38

Right, this makes so much sense! So when you and I work on No Frills it's always been co-creative because there's a little bit of you in every character, but not with Daniel, so if you did commission me for a No Frills then we'd be writing someone who's an outsider to you. You may find him likeable but it's his distance, his mystery, that helps to make him so appealing, and a No Frills would potentially destroy that by bringing him close. Sound about right?

>Mirath, 15:38

Exactly

>The Character Consultancy, 15:38

Okay!

With that in mind, would you still want to look into a way of creating a profile for him? I can think of a way to still make it work, but it would mean working with him differently.

>Mirath, 15:40

I have no idea

Because he still plays a major part, which my story relies on being kept in the dark

>The Character Consultancy, 15:41

Okay, that's all right. Just so you know, here would be my game plan:

Everything on a standard No Frills can be described as a current state of being. What I mean is, if you take Trust & Confidence - the infanthood stage - as an example, there was a stage in your life when you developed your attitude towards trust, but regardless, you have a particular approach to trust *now*.

We don't have to look at your history, it's just that looking at your history gives us extra insights.

And the same is true for Daniel.

If we work on him by looking purely at the way he talks and behaves as an adult then we can still get enough information about him to write something up, we just have less information available.

To look at it a different way, the backstory stuff I write for No Frills is a bonus (just one that most people get by default, which isn't the usual definition of a bonus but still).

The other side of this is that you enjoy his mystery.

So even if we were to work on him in the way I just described, you've still got more information about him.

I completely empathise with that - I know of characters who I prefer precisely because I know less about them.

To know too much would spoil them.

>Mirath, 15:46

Yeah, I guess that's why I've been hesitant about it

>The Character Consultancy, 15:46

That's totally understandable. In that case we don't have to go ahead with a No Frills from him at all.

Well, we never did have to, but I can avoid nudging you about it again.

>Mirath, 15:47

I just think it'd spoil it, even for me

>The Character Consultancy, 15:48

Your other two projects were these:

New commissions - lower because the majority of work is done, all paid off

Friend's story request - May or may not even happen

It sounds like those aren't really on hold or there's nothing in particular that really stops you from working on those other than time and attention constraints, and we've covered those.

Does that sound about right?

>Mirath, 15:49

Yeah so they're very very low on my list because they don't need much attention

>The Character Consultancy, 15:49

Okay, no worries.

Do you have any other thoughts about any of your projects?

I mean, we've come up with the following:

- You're in dormancy with IoC; you're actively interested in EB's transformation stories. Let it be. You're growing in that direction and that's good for you.
- Max and Kay are partial embodiments of you. You dislike being overly controlled but you're also trying to train them towards the outcome in chapter 12, even though you're only on chapter 3. Let them run free.
- We're not wanting to work on Daniel because the less you know, the better.

Is all of that satisfying to you?

>Mirath, 15:51

Sounds about right, to be fair. And at least with EB we've got the hypnosis aspects of it too

>The Character Consultancy, 15:52

It sounds like you're having fun with all of that!

You know I mentioned characters who I prefer not to know much about?

>Mirath, 15:54

Yeah

>The Character Consultancy, 15:55

If I tell you my character who I want to not know much about, d'you promise not to laugh?

>Mirath, 15:55

Go for it

>The Character Consultancy, 15:55

Sonic.exe

So here's the thing. Sonic.exe's fandom came about because someone wrote a Sonic-based creepypasta. Tails finds 'Sonic', except Sonic has black and red eyes and blood dripping from his eyes. He's also evil.

Evil ensues.

The end.

>Mirath, 15:57

Oh the mystery

>The Character Consultancy, 15:58

It was a notoriously cheesy entry.

But here's the thing: I don't really read creepypastas. A short while after that pasta came out I got the bug to watch Sonic game hacks on Youtube. There are some very clever ones on there but then there was this one.

Very little information was given about it. Even its name was a clear play to avoid giving any information: "An Ordinary Sonic Rom Hack".

It's Sonic 1, the original game, but every few seconds the background and colour palette change so that Sonic's running through a dark, red landscape. After a few seconds a floating, black and red eyed version of him starts chasing him, but not by running.

It floats, and is unaffected by Sonic's speed. He can't outrun it. It's as if time and space work differently for this thing, which is behaving in quite a demonic way.

And there's not a great deal Sonic (or indeed the player) can do about it. Sonic keeps slipping into this other realm every few seconds, and only using one of the game's TV screens staves it off.

For a while I knew nothing about this demon-Sonic and loved it that way.

Then I found a different Sonic game with the same character - Sonic.exe, a reconstruction of the game that appears in the creepypasta, and that was cheesy. Creepy, make no mistake, but relied on the character Being Evil At Us.

I still got some enjoyment from seeing Sonic.exe content online but the more I found (and the more content people made and posted) the less mysterious he got. Especially when someone gave Sonic.exe lines of dialogue, gave him a motivation, etc.

I just discovered the character in the 'wrong' order.

>Mirath, 16:04

Ah, right!

>The Character Consultancy, 16:05

A couple of people have managed to create content that did Sonic.exe justice.

That Ordinary Sonic Rom Hack is a prime example because *there is no resolution*. You don't get it to stop following Sonic and my thoughts on that are, Sonic's got to sleep at some point. He's clearly doomed under the circumstances that that game shows.

And someone made a re-write of the creepypasta which again, maintained Sonic.exe's mystery, in fact, it made him even stranger.

I wish I could do something like that for you with Daniel. Of course, you're going for 'confident, sexy stranger' rather than 'terrifying demon', but it shouldn't be fundamentally impossible to define such a character.

After all, even if Sonic.exe doesn't reveal his story he must have internal logic. Otherwise he's just a mess of inconsistent habits and traits.

>Mirath, 16:09

I was wondering if that was going anywhere

>The Character Consultancy, 16:10

Yes - I'm sorry, I wasn't rambling at you. Or I was a bit, but I meant to get to the point where I mentioned how character design can lead to internal logic which gets a character behaving in specific ways but that doesn't have to be revealed to the audience.

But then, you're the audience when it comes to Daniel so you're the one who wants to preserve surprise.

It was just food for thought for me and how I work with such characters.

>Mirath, 16:11

It's okay
