

[00:00:00] **Seher:** Hello, assalamu alaikum. We are back for a special episode of That's Haram. I don't have Kori with me today. Instead, I have my friend Kathryn who has written for us and has written for Paste Magazine to talk about the writer's strike because it's very haram and I have not had a chance to sit down and write about the writer's strike, haha, right?

[00:00:25] And so I figured I'd bring Kathryn on because she would be the perfect person to sit down and talk with me. And we're just gonna talk about the writer's strike, and the SAG-AFTRA strike, and what's happening in Hollywood. This is going to be a very chill conversational episode, but we will include links, as always, in the post down below.

[00:00:42] And if you have any questions, you know where to find us on Discord. Kathryn. What are your thoughts? And how do you feel about the fact that we are past 100 days of the right of strike, making it the second longest strike? No, third longest, technically, I think.

[00:00:58] **Kathryn:** Yeah, I think. Yeah, I think because this one in the sixties was longer.

[00:01:03] But yeah it is not looking great. I would say that honestly, it's a situation where the last strike ended at 100 days. [Yes], because and like you don't end something at 100 days without basically being ready to end it at least 10 days before that. [Yes]. And so no, there's like hitting 100 and they're just being like absolutely nothing that could ever happen to end it anytime soon is not like a huge reassurance, especially with the fact that the WGA has gone back to negotiating whether or not that's going well, we don't know we just know that they're in the process of doing something, but like SAG, like the WGA is can get whatever deal, but like SAG is still on strike.

[00:01:47] It doesn't matter if the WGA is okay, we can go and write all our episodes or movies or whatever. Like the actors still can't do any work or anything at all. And so nothing will get made. And I just, I have to wonder. Obviously we are in such a different landscape than we were 15 years ago when the last strike happened, but you have to wonder like when will hit the AMPTP that they can't make money unless they have more content to sell to the public.

[00:02:15] I don't know why that hasn't hit them yet. I don't know, maybe they're just flush with cash that they say they don't have. But the

[00:02:22] **Seher:** whole refrain this whole time is that we are poor and we ain't got no money, even though we're making record profits. And

[00:02:29] **Kathryn:** it doesn't make any sense. And I don't know who's, I don't know.

[00:02:33] I, there's also the, there's always the thing of does, is the AMPTP even united on anything, which I think, I believe it was Seth Rogan who was on the picket lines, who said something about that, where he was like at the end of the day, the writers and the actors are all coworkers. And when we are done with this, we will go back to being coworkers and like being in working relationships that have to be functional, but like the AMPTP are like enemy businesses, like they have to come to an agreement that they like when they are each other's competitors.

[00:03:05] And so that is the advantage that both of the unions have, but like at the same time, we need to get over ourselves as studios, because it's not. There's nothing that there's nothing truly unreasonable that is being asked of them.

[00:03:22] **Seher:** No, absolutely not. And we'll share all of this stuff in the post, of course.

[00:03:27] I think part of it too, I started this episode off with the assumption that people listening would know what's happening. But the long version short is that AMTP. Wow, so many letters. A M P T P. There we go. Oh my goodness. Is the organization of all of the big studios that negotiates every three years with actually all the unions.

[00:03:47] It's just that the three year period is different for different unions. IATSE, which is the theatrical union, and those are all the people who are in the crew. SAG AFTRA, which is of course our actors. WGA, which is our writers. And then the DGA, which is our directors. And they actually made a deal, and for nothing, because two weeks later the strike started, because their deal is also not great.

[00:04:07] So DGA is just sitting around waiting for things to do, while SAG AFTRA and WGA, of course, are gonna be picketing until... They will picket until this ends, and they will continue to go, because... If WGA and SAG AFTRA, and then in the context of that, DGA getting some of the pros, even though their contract is booty there is no Hollywood, because this is an existential threat.

[00:04:28] And I think part of what's interesting, to your point about what Seth Rogen said, is that there has been a lot of conversation about what if the broadcast companies pulled away from AMPTP and said, okay at ABC, NBC,

Fox, whatever, we'll get together and we'll do something because we need broadcast television to stay afloat.

[00:04:44] But the problem is. Years ago, for those of y'all who've been reading my TV coverage, know, everybody and their mother did vertical integration. So ABC has its own streaming and NBC has its own streaming, Peacock. So now there's not even a way to actually really set people, set the companies apart because they're all technically all one company.

[00:05:03] And frankly, the conglomerations of these companies coming together under AMPTP is just one. It's like essentially the worst family ever because everyone's fighting each other, but you still want mom's approval. And in this case, mom is Carol Lombardi, who is the negotiating chairperson, director, whatever the proper terminology is, for AMPTP.

[00:05:23] And so now we're just stuck in the situation where you're right, they need more content. And technically, the assumption is that there's enough stuff that's been filmed over the last two years, and the backlog of trying to catch up after COVID, post COVID. At the same time, I, unfortunately based on what I've been reading, I really do think it's going to take until the first quarter where they have negative numbers for them to be like, oh, shit.

[00:05:50] Because then this, it, unfortunately, all of this is because of stockholders. So when the stockholders are like, yeah, you guys got to get back together, I think that's what's going to happen. But that really sucks because

[00:05:59] **Kathryn:** it's going to

[00:06:00] **Seher:** take forever. Yeah, at the time this episode is going to come out, I think it's going to be 120 days for WGA.

[00:06:05] Where are we and what's that, what is that gonna do?

[00:06:08] **Kathryn:** That is, yeah I mentioned it in the article that I wrote for Paste but the way that this strike will hit just like linear television is so different because the last strike, like it started in November, it started in the middle of filming, like most writing was finished, like effectively for those, for every show that got cut off at the end Grey's, Supernatural, everything, which are the only two that I can, oh, House, god, I don't, ugh big three of what happened at the end of this season but the actors, one of the actors weren't strike, so they could still film, and most of the season was done, but this, strike started when

most writers rooms were going to go back to start writing the new seasons for this year.

[00:06:52] *Abbott Elementary* was supposed to go back the day that the strike happened. And and so not only do we not have there is no backlog after what has already been filmed and made, there is no backlog for anything for the linear broadcast season. And that is like really, I think people are going to realize once they hit fall because like summer is always a dead zone anyway.

[00:07:13] And is mostly, I would say summer is since streaming has become like really viable, has been dominated by streaming because like broadcast television doesn't have anything going on except for like shows that they pushed a summer that they know they're not going to renew and reality TV. And so we're gonna see what I'm assuming will be the real as long.

[00:07:33] We'll see if it'll be the reality TV boom. Because, there is the push for reality stars to. Unionize. And SAG AFTRA has said that if you're a reality star, then SAG is your union. Which I think

[00:07:46] **Seher:** And the crews are trying to unionize too. I think, interestingly, I'm glad you brought that up.

[00:07:53] I was thinking about this earlier. Kathryn and I are on Twitter. A group chat with another one of our friends and we used to every year during up front season complain that things were boring. And then I think about how this might be all our fault. I'm obviously joking. Clearly we have no power, but we every year would be like, wow, give us something new.

[00:08:10] And then we got a strike. Yikes. But I do think it's interesting to point out. The bit about the summer programming where the idea is people are going to catch up because a lot of people aren't in school, a lot of the people who are viewers, obviously the people who are working self to work full time jobs, but there's a lot more quote unquote time available or that's always been the idea about the summer and the whole reason why TV even starts in September as I've written about is because of automobile companies wanting to advertise.

[00:08:36] So now I was reading recently that people who are thinking about if you work backwards from a certain date, at what point can you get TV on to TV? If that makes sense is like September, which we are hitting next week. So if they want 10, 13 episodes, they're going to have to start in September.

[00:08:54] If they want to push it and be like we're cool with just getting 10 episodes, then they'll have to, they can push over longer. And I think part of the issue is that I AMP TP definitely seems like they're just gonna hold out because they just want to, because they don't want to lose any of their money, but it's such a short sighted thing yes, capitalism, the whole reason we're in this problem is because of that, but if you are going to ruin your entire system for just this 2023 period.

[00:09:19] There will be nothing to air next year. You will not have anything to film next year because everyone will have already left for other things in their lives because unfortunately people are losing their homes. Billy Porter can't make rent because it's not like just you being on a show makes you money.

[00:09:32] It's 87% of the SAG AFTRA can't even freaking get insurance because they don't make enough during the year to be covered by insurance.

[00:09:39] **Kathryn:** It's a mess and I honestly, if you, I think that the biggest. The easiest way to really realize that actors doing acting solely acting does not make a lot of money is look at how many if you look at how many brand deals A list celebrities have that is where they're getting their money.

[00:09:53] Zendaya, except for Her like, maybe like the second season of Euphoria where she got like a million dollars, I don't know, she's shooting a million dollars episode for season three if it ever happens, but like she didn't get all of her money from being on Euphoria. She probably got more money from EPing it than she did being on it for season two, but she is like a brand ambassador for so many things.

[00:10:12] She's getting her money from Smartwater. She's not getting her money from HBO.

[00:10:15] **Seher:** And it's like when I see people on Cameo, or [exactly, yeah]. Oh my gosh, the number of times that I've seen people, Patrick J. Adams, the guy on *Suits*, I saw him on an advertisement for one of those phone games. And actually, hilariously enough, I also saw Rick Hoffman, the other guy from *Suits*, he was on the, he was, it was a cameo ad.

[00:10:35] So this is the wildest part about it is that it's not just, Oh, like we're doing sponsorships with these random mobile games. The companies for the mobile games are putting in requests, through cameo to get actors to pretend like they're playing these phone games. And it's the one where it's, you can play it off of wifi and there's no ads, which is.

[00:10:52] Partly why it's one of those things where it's like the idea is it's going to get more people to play it and it's a match three like the king has been like . Yeah. So I saw I saw Rick Louis, lol. And then I saw Patrick J. Adams later and I was like, How is Patrick J. Adams, who is an active actor and director and does all these things, having to, and I don't want to use the term stoop low, but essentially, why are you on Cameo doing 300 dollar, 500 dollar gigs for a mobile phone?

[00:11:19] And I and that's

[00:11:20] **Kathryn:** So That's the thing, because they could just actually pay him. They're not even going through proper channels to get an advertising deal. They are paying they're underpaying him for a brand deal, essentially.

[00:11:31] **Seher:** And so if we have all these people who are doing that, and these are people who we know by name, or by face we're in a bad place.

[00:11:38] This is the bad place, in fact. And I think it's going to be interesting too, because for background actors, and I think part of the hard part COVID of course is awful for all of the reasons, but had COVID not happened, the WGA would have in fact, struck last time. Because they would have been able to do the contract negotiations and get a lot of these problems solved.

[00:11:58] I don't know if SAG AFTRA would have been there, because I think for those of you who have been following along, and those of you who haven't, Fred Drescher, who was the president of SAG AFTRA, totally thought that they were gonna negotiate in good faith, which was a mistake on her part. But once she realized that they were totally going to screw her and her union, she, immediately turned to, yeah, we're gonna have to do what we need to do.

[00:12:15] And is now, of course, giving like the best speeches on the planet because when she's right, she's right when she's wrong. It's please stop talking. It's very interesting to see, even side after leadership, I think. For the most part publicly, we're very much we're willing to come to the table and do what we need to do and then they extended the end by day.

[00:12:33] Extended the negotiation so they could get the Barbie in the Oppenheimer movie.

[00:12:39] **Kathryn:** Yeah, which like, I'll say not even like in, not even, not to not even in their favor, not even it's okay Barbie helped revitalize the American economy but really, at the end of the day.

[00:12:50] The the seven, what is it, like a seven, like a seven billion, no, I don't know, whatever the whole Taylor Swift, Beyonce, *Barbie* phenomenon that happened that gave seven billion dollars to the U. S. economy the AMPTP still dug a three billion dollar hole in the California economy, and that's the sixth biggest economy in the world, so at the end of the day the move people are gonna go see *Barbie* anyway, but I, yeah, it's and also, there are At least, I'm begging for them to delay *Dune*, but there are at least there's at least one movie that I know that's that was supposed to be like Oscar bait that got delayed.

[00:13:21] Challengers got delayed. That was Oscar bait. For sure. And the fact that it got delayed to April of next year they, like why even, why go through the work of delaying a movie when you could just actually negotiate with SAG AFTRA?

[00:13:37] **Seher:** Especially considering they didn't delay *Blue Beetle*, and did not care, even though everyone asked them to, and so now we're in this really weird situation where, it's one of those things where it's like quite literally hot labor summer and also just so freaking hot outside.

[00:13:51] People are melting. And I think one of the things that hasn't been written about as much, or at least I haven't seen it, because I don't see everything, and I do have to dissertate, which takes up so much dang time, I just want to read other things with my life hours, is the fact that psychologically everyone is literally one thing away from cracking, because I don't understand it.

[00:14:10] Or, let me rephrase, I don't think that the AMPTP understands what we, you and I do, is that at some point this 100 plus days is going to turn into something where literally all the people who are on strike are just straight up just gonna stop giving a single solitary shit and it's going to turn into utter chaos because people are going to lose their minds and also not just them the people who are honking on the street in support of obviously they care and so they're supporting the people who are striking, but they're the people early on, someone tried to run over a striker, right?

[00:14:39] And so we have all of these things happening and at some point, especially in LA and in New York, where the two big strike hubs are, it's gonna end up, unfortunately, turning into a really bad situation. And I don't think that really there's, I don't know, because the person was talking about it, but I hope that there's been some behind the scenes thinking about, like, how do we make sure that we keep. our local folks safe and then also think about engaging the local folks because I think with LA you have to drive everywhere. So you could

just drive and hawk and see people on the bridge or whatever. And I think New York, to some extent, obviously people are driving clearly, but there's a lot more walkability in New York.

[00:15:12] And so people who are randos can see oh, there's these people striking. I wonder what that's about, especially if they're not paying attention to social media. So I, it's just, it is definitely a stressful and I think partly to the sad part is even if, and when, I mean I should say when, I hope when, I really hope when they legit start negotiating, like WGA is gonna have to concede some things that they want, and so then the fear is [what the concessions are gonna be], what are they gonna have to, yeah, exactly.

[00:15:39] **Kathryn:** Yeah, it's, I don't know, there's so much, like it's all of the stuff that they asked for. It's needed. Yes. There's nothing that they there's nothing that's extra

[00:15:49] **Seher:** to counter. We don't care. Let me see if I can find the document because I will read some of it to y'all. It's just so ridiculous.

[00:15:56] **Kathryn:** Yeah, it is.

[00:15:57] Because looking at the last strike, the one thing that they, if I'm remembering correctly, the one thing that they didn't manage to pump up. Or DVD residuals, which like, in the grand scheme of things, [It doesn't matter now!] It doesn't matter now! There was no way of knowing that back then, but It's okay, at least you got the streaming residuals, Because that really does matter now, even if, But that's the thing, it's streaming residuals...

[00:16:17] Much like the federal minimum wage should maybe inflate with the value of what is being, like what it's had. And like, when you have people getting paid the same pennies that they were paid 15 years ago, that doesn't actually make any sense. And like the fact that you look at the structure of mini rooms and the like fact that TV is short now.

[00:16:42] And I really think that if you look at Suits being like the biggest thing on streaming, maybe that's because each season has a normal amount of episodes and people like watching TV with 20 plus episodes, like you can actually develop a story. You can actually do something that is interesting and flesh out all your characters and have an interesting ensemble cast.

[00:17:04] And if you have an ensemble cast, you need 20 episodes to make people care. And you can't do that if you have eight or 10 or six like Marvel,

which I still will never be over the dumbest episode count of all time. I like, oh, that's a movie Like, it's a movie ugh, whatever. But, yeah,

[00:17:21] **Seher:** I agree.

[00:17:22] And I think it's also interesting to think about the fact that the reason why *Suits* is doing so well is because there's a billion episodes to watch. So people are just letting it run. Versus the number of minutes, at which, okay, can we also talk about how ridiculous it is that Netflix counts it as minutes?

[00:17:34] Just tell me how many hours that is. I'm not doing the math. Tell me how many hours is 373 million minutes or whatever the heck for I'm looking at TV Grim Reaper, he tracks all of this for everybody.

[00:17:45] **Kathryn:** That number is smaller, so it's a bad number. It's an hour. Shut up.

[00:17:49] **Seher:** Oh. Psychologically, no one cares what these minutes mean, but *Suits* is working off of I think half of the season is on there right now.

[00:17:57] Hold on, I'm looking real quick. Yeah, so there's 136 episodes available, so of course there's 3, 000, 698, no wait. Sorry, I can do math. 3, 698, 000, 000, there we go. So many numbers are happening. And the commas threw me off. And in fact, you know what's really funny though? The next thing underneath it is Disney Plus *Bluey*.

[00:18:17] 140 episodes. 1, 353, 000, 000 minutes. Clearly *Bluey* is living its best life. But that's cause kids replay videos. And kids parents replay which, that's a whole separate essay for another day on Netflix, and not having replayability for their kids content, whatever. There's so many things we can talk about.

[00:18:31] But of course, students is going to have that big view. So you just have to let things run. Like people will watch a billion hours of NCIS over 10 hours of, don't get me wrong, I freaking love *Julie and the Phantoms*, but people are not going to sit and watch *Julie and the Phantoms* that many hours over and over again.

[00:18:45] It's just not happening. And so the kind of media that the streamers can make within the context of how little they want to pay means now that we don't have any of that space. But you were talking about mini rooms. So for

those who don't know, Mini Rooms are essentially like small rooms that are for a short period of time.

[00:19:02] They write everything and then they are done and then the show gets filmed and so the writers don't get to go on set and edit on the fly and help with making sure that everything actually fits in the context of what's being filmed that day. Because on set, 1001 things can change at the last minute and writers are there to help.

[00:19:19] All of those changes in and one of the what's the word I'm looking for negotiation demands, what have you clauses was pre green light room. So minimum staff are guaranteed at least 10 consecutive weeks of work instead of 2 or 3 or 4 or whatever the really short period is. And the answer was rejected our proposals refused to make a counter.

[00:19:39] Similarly, they did this AMPTP did this for so many different things. For the pension, each member of a team gets pension and health contributions as if they were writing as an individual. Rejected our proposal, refused to make a counter, because what happens with team writers, these are usually two people writing together, they get paid the same as if they were one writer.

[00:19:57] So they are getting paid 50 50, and their health contributions are 50 50, even though they are two individual humans, and they're supposed to be getting... 200% technically for doing the math that way. Again, refused our proposal, refused to make a counter. Nevermind artificial intelligence, hot nonsense.

[00:20:12] Regulate use of artificial intelligence on the covered projects underneath this deal. AI can't write or rewrite literary material, it can't be used as source material, and the cover material can't be used to train AI. Rejected our proposal. Countered by offering annual meetings to discuss advancements in technology.

[00:20:31] Of course now, there was a lawsuit that just happened that states that AI cannot in fact be copyrighted. So this will probably be adjusted over time to probably not be as much of an issue. I just don't know, cause I haven't read the lawsuit in detail. If it's generative versus there's so many kinds of AI.

[00:20:47] But either way, like this, that does, kick them in the butt a little bit, which is good. But so many

[00:20:52] **Kathryn:** of the idea of a meeting. What do you mean a meeting?

[00:20:58] **Seher:** Meeting is when you don't go to your regular HR meetings. And SAG AFTRA had the same exact experience. I'm going to pull theirs up too. SAG AFTRA, they were like, yeah, we're not going to talk to you about it.

[00:21:07] And so there's T shirts about. There are t shirts now that are like, oh, we should do this too. And this is rejected and it's every time I see it, it honestly reminds me of six beheaded, dead, survived. Oh yeah. And I'm like, this would be a great t shirt. But yeah, what is this behavior AMPTP? Like it is

[00:21:26] **Kathryn:** It is just so weird of it is I have no other word for it than delusional. Yeah. Like it really is I. It I guess when you get used to like taking advantage of and exploiting the people who make you money for so long, then you just think they're going to lay down and like maybe the pandemic fooled them because like they, there is no ability, you can't strike when there is a pandemic with no vaccine that just, you have to just cut your losses and hope you don't get COVID before we can prevent death.

[00:22:02] So maybe they were just like, just had complete blinders on. I just there's no way that I can imagine looking at like the demands and thinking. Yeah, no. About all of them. And maybe I am just a normal person. I don't know. Maybe I'm just normal. Maybe I just understand how the world should probably work a little bit.

[00:22:25] But that you can't just look at the people who make you money and say, Actually, no. I'm not gonna pay you what you deserve. Or even a fraction of that, actually. I'm gonna make you, like... Stop doing the work that you one, you don't do creative work without liking it.

[00:22:42] You don't sign up to be a screenwriter or an actor unless you're, like, with the exception of child actors. You don't sign up for that unless it's something that you want to do. That is not a thing. And then, like, why should the people who like, when you're a screenwriter, you give up the copyright of your work to the studios.

[00:23:04] No one does that for fun. You want to do this because you love doing it, and you should be able to be paid to survive off of that. And there are, like, there was this woman, I forget what her... What her name was, but she is like from a, her father was a screenwriter and now she is a screenwriter and she was like, my dad was able to support our family off of screenwriting when I was a kid and I like can barely afford this apartment and I'm freelancing and that is just the, I think the best way to look at it where it's yeah, like you can create like maybe not generational wealth, but like gen like generational safety.

[00:23:43] As like financial safety for your family if you were a screenwriter like in the 90s or the early 2000s, but like you can't do that now and it hasn't been that long and that is not something that is like good for the industry or good for anyone. And at the same time, like it also then, I think.

[00:24:02] In an unfortunate slash fortunate loop around like you have these writers who are so used to freelancing and doing side jobs that like, of course, they're going to be able to hold out for a strike with the financial support of the general pop like people donating to like strike funds or just like also the WGA having their own strike fund that they use to Yes.

[00:24:26] Of course they're going to be able to make it longer. They also have other jobs. Having two jobs is not supposed to be a thing that everyone does. That is not supposed to be normal, but it has become the norm in this industry and a lot of other industries. Because everything's just gig work now.

[00:24:41] Everything is just gig work now, which is so bad. You want people to stay at the jobs that they're at and become good at them. That is the point of skilled labor. I don't, And I think,

[00:24:52] **Seher:** I just wanted to say even in the most cynical approach what, again, this is what I said earlier if AMPTP wants to screw everyone for this year, okay, fine, I understand that in a very nearsighted way, but what will you do in 10 years when there's no one working, because if you, quote, have AI do everything, unquote, which is, this very cynical approach to how they're thinking about creating art, there will not be anyone to watch your things to make money, because, yes, there will be people who go watch that stuff who don't know any better or are paying attention, okay?

[00:25:20] But most people are not going to continue to watch, Oh, there's an AI actor in this AI movie written by an AI writer, written by an AI director. In that context, all of those written by, doing by, just means plagiarized. It's just a mechanical Throwing out cospypasta, for lack of a better word. You know what I would read though?

[00:25:38] I would read Ridiculous AI Creepypasta. That I feel would be hilarious. But besides that, I'm not reading squat. And it's not just Hollywood, it's every industry. And I think that's the other part of it is that, I see, because both of us are also Kathryn and I are both in the book world, and especially in the context of how publishing...

[00:25:55] The industry is just as disgusting and broken and there's so many parallels and frankly copying one another, but in the U. S. because of antitrust stuff, writers can't, in this context, writers of books and publishing can't strike, and so there's not really a huge way forward, and even the HarperCollins, which is a big publication publisher that strike the people who were part of the union have been fired.

[00:26:18] And so there's no recourse in any of these situations. And you know what's really bonkers to me? This is the one piece that even though I understand everything else, I cannot wrap my mind around. How has it been this many decades that Hollywood has gotten away with paying people late and no one has done anything?

[00:26:34] **Kathryn:** Yeah, that's insane. I can't believe I can't what do you mean? And then you also have the thing where, what was, what show was he on? The guy who was on *Liv and Maddie* was like, oh yeah, Disney only pays us 88% of the minimum basic agreement because they don't have to, they don't have to pay us.

[00:26:53] If for the first three seasons of a Disney show, they are allowed to pay 88% of minimum basic agreement. And then they, if you look at It was, like, every Disney show that has gone past four seasons, I believe, has rebooted with a subtitle. So it's the same show, but it's *Hannah Montana Forever*, or *The Suite Life on Deck*, or *Liv and Maddie Cali Style*, or whatever.

[00:27:16] Which that one really is that is a cop out name. Really? Cali Style? You guys were scrambling for something. But that's wild to me that they are just allowed to do that. And these are, one, child actors. They're not getting paid anyway. And they're, yeah, we have protections for child actors, but the protections are outdated and bad.

[00:27:37] To keep it short, Jeanette McCurdy talks about how her mom just like never gave her a Coogan account. That's insane. And I, and also he like, what was it? Will Wheaton, also when he was on Star Trek and was he was under 18 for a significant portion of it when he was on A Next Generation and he has talked about how he went to his parents when he was, like, in his 20s and was like, where's my money from when I was on Star Trek, and they were like, oh, we spent it all there aren't actual real protections.

[00:28:06] **Seher:** For that wage theft is the biggest theft in the damn world. And

[00:28:09] **Kathryn:** It's wild and protectionous and in regards to Disney, they don't get residuals either, the, no, like I, it is so it, I think, obviously the studio system from back in the olden days of Hollywood like way back in the day like it was not good. Because everything was owned by the same people. Like it's a big antitrust nightmare, but now you have this very similar antitrust nightmare where everyone in order to get around antitrust laws has gone through these loopholes. That no one is patching up and it just gets messier and messier because the more loopholes you go through, the more loopholes you can find.

[00:28:48] And where is the money going? It's going somewhere. It's not going to the people who really deserve it at the end of the day.

[00:28:57] **Seher:** And I think that's another thing, too, is that at the end of the day, even the most hyper capitalist bro is not going to be like, oh yeah, CEOs absolutely deserve seven bazillion dollars.

[00:29:09] That's just not a thing that's happening. And so to say that, oh, we don't have enough money, and that's why we can't pay you. No, you have plenty of money, you're just giving it to the people who don't deserve it. And that's the, that's just the end of it, regardless of how you want to talk about it, in whichever, way we want to dice it.

[00:29:23] The problem is that the people who actually make the media, star in the media, direct the media, are literally putting the damn lights on for the show. Never mind the fact that, I'm really interested to see how this is going to go for IATSE next year, because, okay. God forbid this goes into next year, IATSE's up next for negotiating their next year contract.

[00:29:43] And IATSE actually last year, not last year, last time that they did their negotiations, it was not a clear cut popular vote of, yeah, we support this contract, by the way. It was, I think something like, I'm not, don't quote me on this. I want to say it was like really close because the popular vote, sorry, the population vote of IATSE was one thing.

[00:30:07] And then the union leadership vote was another. And so there's a lot of people who I see are like, yeah, we didn't want that deal. We would have. Dropped if our leadership had a lot of distract and I'm actually going to include a link. That's really long, but really cool. And it literally outlines the reasons why I think leadership is tomato.

[00:30:23] So I'm really hoping that doesn't happen next year, but if this is going to be a continued thing, then it's AMPTP. Truly. It's just not going to

come back to the table. Although they did last week. They haven't. We're recording this on Tuesday, the 22nd. They did not meet on Monday, so probably the next time they're going to meet is on a Friday.

[00:30:41] I am hopeful that by the end of this month, early into September, that we will get some information on what's going on. I appreciate a lot that the WGA is doing a media blackout. We're not posting anything, we're not saying anything about it until we have real news to say. Because the other thing that we forgot to mention is that APTP owns all the dang media websites.

[00:31:01] We forgot to bring that up. Variety, everybody and their mother is owned by APTP, so everything is going to be causing problems.

[00:31:12] **Kathryn:** Yeah, that article about about the writers not wanting required minimums for writers rooms. Was like the if you look at the article and they're like some right there like the they're like the Writers Guild wants this but some of the writers don't and then every like literally every writer on Twitter was like what are you talking about?

[00:31:29] And yeah there was like I'm trying to think of a show that has one there are two shows with one showrunner that I can think of right now. One of them is good and one of them is *Euphoria* and one of them's the, you know what, there's three, one of them's *The Idol*. So you know what, that's two for, two for three on bad.

[00:31:46] Is Mike White really good at riding the *White Lotus*? Yeah, should've been a limited series, in my opinion, but you know what, that's okay I think that if you went into those two rooms, Mike White could actually do well with a writer's room. I don't think that Sam Levinson would be able to write *Euphoria* if he had a writer's room because people would actually shoot down his ideas.

[00:32:03] That's the, that's what I have to say about that. That's me being nice. I

[00:32:07] **Seher:** concur. And all of these things that are written by one person have never actually truly been that good. What I was gonna say though is Plug for Maureen Ryan's *Burn it Down*, where she literally talks about this idea that we have these genius au authors who need to be like, trusted with everything, but really they're just not any of that.

[00:32:25] Yeah.

[00:32:25] **Kathryn:** I, reading that book that is honestly, that is like the one book that I could recommend for anyone going into the industry in any way possible, like journalism or just like actual production just like reading that, knowing how insidious. Hollywood really is. It was like, I I could believe it, but my jaw was still on the floor and in the way that it's some of it is very active the blacklisting of Nicole Bihari reading about that, was like, I, Was in like, I was like, I like I knew, but like you like seeing the words on the page and like seeing how Maureen Ryan was directly like told about like she was like in, not like she wasn't like obviously a perpetuator of this but she was like told parts of this story and as she's writing the chapter you see her like uncover all the connection as from what she's been told by PR and like these actors and what actually happened and all it's just yeah.

[00:33:26] But also you know it talks about how like even in the parts that aren't insidious and malicious. Hollywood is such a white man's club, that they won't change with *Lost* a lot of the people who she talked to were like yeah of course, no one was telling Damon Lindelof and J.J Abrams, no they were in a room with all of their white male friends. And even if

[00:33:44] **Seher:** they had who was, who are they going to listen to? There's no power. The whole issue with Hollywood is that power is concentrated in these very specific ways that there's no real, just like with the wage theft, there's no real system.

[00:33:56] That, that is,

[00:33:57] **Kathryn:** there's no checks and balances. There's nothing to, there is no bureaucracy is like the worst, but it does serve a purpose. In places where people are so overexploited, and does it maybe create this cycle of exploitation? Sure. But also, when you have no one actually trying in the first place...

[00:34:17] How are we even gonna know that it doesn't work like you have to try to like to fix something first before you decide it is a broken system, and we have like as an industry Hollywood has tried to fix things and they've not worked and they've tried to fix things and they haven't worked and we are back at the point where we have tried to do something, and it has not worked and that's why everyone is on strike because like we need there is no way.

[00:34:41] That this is sustainable for anyone. I don't see how I just don't I've truly do not see how the AMPTP and the studios see this as sustainable for themselves in any way possible. I don't see how they think that underpaid like undervaluing the people that work for them. Is going to make them more

money, is going to make them better content, is going to make, which like, I hate to call it content, but that's what it is to them.

[00:35:09] Yeah, absolutely. And I just, it's so weird to watch this just wave of the 20 episodes season going away, but then shows with 8 to 13 episodes getting canceled after one season because there's no audience for it, but you never allowed an audience to grow. Because everything is there's like a need for instant financial gratification, which you don't get if you don't let a show sit for a little bit and then give it a season to look at *The Bear*.

[00:35:41] *The Bear* is huge. I watched *The Bear* when it first came out and some people were talking about it, but it wasn't everywhere. And it's, and then people, it's, it got renewed and it sat for a year and then it came back with an even bigger audience. And that's not something that really happens anymore.

[00:35:59] Because no one lets TV just sit, and I think that is really, obviously some shows are bad. Some shows should get cancelled. [Yes, absolutely.] But you do have to give TV a chance to marinate. That's what's so good about linear television, is that you get people... Who get hooked on something and like maybe some people are like, Oh, I didn't start watching this show like when it came out, but I caught an episode near the end of the season and I want to go back and rewatch it.

[00:36:25] And I think that is what was nice about the CW Netflix deal was like when the show ended where the season ended a week later, it would be on Netflix. And if you look at the numbers for *Riverdale* season two, it had a huge premiere on broadcast TV. It had insane ratings. Like they were at like off the charts and that is how you build an audience and there's nothing left like you can't do that anymore because of the way that things are set up like there is no building an audience you can't with mini rooms where you like write a pilot and then the next two episodes you can write those and then the show can just never get made.

[00:37:01] But like, how do you know that it's gonna be, like, bad? You don't know what's gonna be bad. You didn't give the actor that's why pilots exist, is so that you can see if it'll be bad. Yeah, you have to pay all those people.

[00:37:11] **Seher:** And our system is just so ridiculous too, because we went from having a hundred something pilots being filmed and checked out to see if we were going to push them through, and you never know which pilots are actually going to land because it's just so dependent on factors outside of the control of the studios.

[00:37:27] And I think now the approach is we're just going to do whatever the heck we want. We're going to put this on the on. I say the internet because streaming's on the internet, and then that's just gonna be the end of it. But I also think it's really funny because so much of this conversation and the problems are related to Netflix being in charge and having so much power in the media and the industry.

[00:37:45] However, the stuff that does really well in their top 10 is just the stuff that showed up in the last month. It's just the stuff that's on the last month because when people see it's in the top 10, they need to go to watch it. And then it just keeps going to go back and forth, and that's it. The shows that do well don't necessarily do well because they are good shows.

[00:38:06] And obviously, good is not an objective thing here. That's not really the point of the conversation. But if your entire premise for how you think about marketing and creating is, we're just gonna throw this on there, and it'll do if it does well, versus, we know that shows that we put up there will do well in the first 10, first 30 days, based on how we think about it.

[00:38:26] That those are two totally different approaches to thinking about your, the media that you're publishing, especially for shows like *Julie and the Phantoms* or other shows that got canceled, even though they quote did well in the context of how many minutes that were viewed, their algorithm, their expectation, their ideas around how something quote does well is totally opaque to the rest of us, right?

[00:38:47] It's all vibes. It has to do with how many people are watching and how many or whatever and et cetera. And you can't fight that, but we. You

[00:38:56] **Kathryn:** can't fight data! No, you can't. And I was also gonna say it probably also has to do with like how much marketing they have to do. Because some shows, some shows can do really well with a marketing push.

[00:39:06] I think that an example of that is *First Kill*. *First Kill* was basically like marketed by like some of my mutuals on Twitter. And it did really well after, quote unquote really well. And then Netflix, was like, oh actually we do care. Marketing wise, but they, I, from a like complete numbers business perspective, you don't want to spend money to make money, which is stupid because you actually do have to spend money to make money.

[00:39:33] But you don't want to spend more than you think you have to. And so if you think a show is going to flop, it makes sense financially to not spend

money on marketing it. But also you would think that when you realize that the show is not going to flop that you would take some time and reevaluate.

[00:39:49] Because clearly that is not what happened. I don't, I just don't, I don't know. There's so many decisions that happen, and I just think that they are bad. And, the state of television. It'll always be something. And it sure is something right now.

[00:40:06] **Seher:** And I think ultimately, just because we could sit here forever, but it is, we do have to leave eventually.

[00:40:12] I think the saddest part, like obviously the fact that people are having issues with paying the bills, like all of that obviously is not great, clearly. But I think one of the saddest things about this is that media and TV as we know it has not even reached 100 years yet. If this is what's happening now...

[00:40:30] Because when you think about TV in the context of the first TV show *I Love Lucy* and *The Lone Ranger* being in the 40s we are not even close. We still have a solid 15 years before we hit that point. And so if this is just within the first 100 years of TV being consolidated and made into this very specific approach of writing and creation, what, what is left?

[00:40:51] For when we are old and crusty and the people under us come up next, right? What is going to happen for the people who want to break in now, but can't break in because it requires so much access? There are so many people who do ask me anythings, and I'm going to explain this, and I'm going to tell you how to do that, and so much of the advice is like when I came up, through Hollywood, I went to this really cool writers group, or I was part of this really cool contest that CBS doesn't have anymore, and I'm going to do all of these things, and in 2020, because everyone and their mother was like, oh my god, we care about DEI, all of these companies, all the studios said that they would have these diversity clauses and all these things, and we don't have any data that's public of whether that worked.

[00:41:27] And if it did work, it doesn't matter because now everybody and their mother's on strike it's

[00:41:31] **Kathryn:** not It's just sad. It is a sad landscape. And it is so hard it is so much harder to break into than it probably ever was because of the lack of there you need to keep creative media actually good.

[00:41:48] You need like fresh blood and there is a huge lack of that because there are, there's just a lack of jobs you can't on a, on a 20 episode show. There are, there's a decent amount of people in that writer's room on a 10 episode show. There's four, you're not, and they're all, and because it's so limited you like the people producing it are going to be like we want the best we can find.

[00:42:11] So it's going to be really hard to get a a person who has just risen up from writer's assistant. On a show like that. And so there's nothing like, like *friends* or *Seinfeld* or the early days of *Grey's* anymore. Like you can't just get somewhere. There are people who like are on the picket line who are like, I've been a writer's assistant for six years for six different jobs and that's not how it's supposed to be.

[00:42:35] You're supposed to be able to move up. And the fact that there is no upward mobility is very concerning. And as I think, that is one of the other huge issues with many rooms is it's yeah, you're, not only are you a veteran writer in a miniroom, you're getting paid like you're not a veteran writer and then, because the show doesn't ever go anywhere most of the time, no one is getting paid and so no one has a new job and everyone is just stuck, which is really terrible.

[00:43:06] **Seher:** Yeah, I could not have said it any better. That was amazing, that is literally the rundown of what, that is literally why the WGA is like, everybody, you guys suck, so hard, because all the people who should have already moved up in the hierarchy has not been able to, and so this has been a problem, not just in the last three years in the making, but literally over the last decade that I have been paying attention, I mean I've been paying attention longer, but since the time that I've been paying attention to TV as a wee middle schooler who had no idea what I was getting into when I was just watching *The Mentalist* on CBS who would have thought we'd be here now in 2023?

[00:43:38] And so I just hope that this episode was informational and entertaining and If you had no idea what was going on, you're like, wow, I just learned so many things. But of course, Kori would be very disappointed in me if I did not tell you all that we have many other podcasts that are running. That's from, we'll go back to being on hiatus until I graduate.

[00:43:57] Unless something else chaotic happens. I don't know, I don't really want something else as epic as The Writers Strike to occur for me to come out of. A break. But anyways, we have All Bark, No Dice Beneath the Screen of the Ultra Critics. Cannon Fodder is on hiatus as well, but will eventually be coming back.

[00:44:13] I have been told. Hopefully, I'm not wrong. Kori, don't correct me. Faeforge Academy is every Friday. We have Right to Survive that has episodes here and there. And we may or may not be having another... podcast interview series starting soon. So again, I'll put all the links for everything in the post below.

[00:44:31] And thank you for listening to us and Kathryn, thank you so much for spending time with me. I hope you enjoyed the That's Haram experience. Usually I say That's Haram more often, it's all very Haram. So it's all bad. Everything. Okay, cool.