**The Rewrite: Season 2**

**Episode 2: Writers and Writing in the Pandemic**

OPENING MUSIC SEGMENT (8–10 seconds)

**ROLAND GULLIVER [TEASER]**

Hello, my name is Rolland Gulliver, Director of the Toronto International Festival of Authors, and you are listening to the second season of *The ReWrite* podcast. What began as a limited eight-episode series has now expanded, as we revisit our initial thoughts about the COVID-19 pandemic, as the world continues to shift and adapt from its effects.

From conversations with authors, literary award organizers, booksellers and publishing professionals, plus an inside look at the Toronto International Festival of Authors, Canada's largest and longest-running literary festival, these new episodes will explore the different experiences as each adapted during a difficult year of lockdowns and uncertainty.

Through these challenges emerge incredible stories of resilience, the power of community and bold innovation. We don’t know what the future looks like just yet, but by exploring these perspectives, we hope you feel optimistic about what it will bring.

Now here is your host, Stephanie Fraser.

MUSIC TRANSITION (5–6 SECONDS)

**STEPHANIE FRASER [INTRO]**

What has it been like for writers as they navigated the pandemic? Are there new opportunities to tell stories or is has it been a struggle to get words onto a page? In this episode, I spoke with Omar Mouallem and Bridget Canning, two writers living and working in Canada about their experiences navigating the pandemic.

Our first guest is Omar, an award-winning writer and filmmaker in Edmonton. He has written on Muslim and Middle Eastern issues for *the Guardian*, *the Ringer* and *WIRED*. In 2020, as the effects of the pandemic started taking shape and writing opportunities started disappearing, Omar found a way to create new opportunities to support writers by founding the Pandemic University School of Writing. These new online classes provided writers and storytellers a space to connect with a community, earn an income and share their craft with eager students.

MUSIC TRANSITION (4–5 SECONDS)

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**STEPHANIE FRASER (SF)**

Before we jump into learning more about how you became the Fake Dean of Pandemic University, can you take us back to March of last year and your experience as the effects of the pandemic started taking shape? What were your initial thoughts as news travelled about the virus?

**Omar Mouallem (OM)**

Oh man, well, I'm sure like a lot of people I thought it can't be that bad. [Laughs] And I knew that it was bad because the Starbucks that I called my second office suddenly closed one day, and that's when I knew the pandemic was bad. [Laughs] Kidding aside, that is actually how it kind of clicked in with me, ‘cause you know, I'd been seeing the like the mild effects of the pandemic through the Starbucks 'cause I was in the middle of… I was in the tail end of writing my book. I was spending a lot of time there…my parents lived nearby there, so I would drop off my kids, go to Starbucks, right, and then you know, first it was like okay you can't… we're not allowing any stay dishware, so everything is in like a to go cup now, and it's like okay, now you can't have a water, we're not allowed to pour water for people anymore. It's like okay, I don’t quite get that but alright. And then I came in one day and all the seats in the tables were penned off and it was to go only, I was like okay it’s here. Like, alright, I guess I mean that was that was sort of like the first effect, I was like okay I have to work from home now, which you know you would think of writer would be good at that, but I never was. I always needed to sort of find like the library or cafe to work from, at least for most of the day.

But then it started to get you know a lot more serious, I mean obviously it started to get a lot more serious, but just in terms of like the facts that I was seeing in my work it started to get a lot more serious. Like I said I was just at the tail ends of writing my book, so I was simultaneously getting some freelance work ready, you know, getting ready to return to freelance journalism and I had a couple of stories lined up. I also had a documentary tour lined up for movie I'd made called *Digging in the Dirt* and you know, one by one, all those opportunities evaporated before I could actually tackle them. So, you know, it amounted to about $6,000 in contracts, which you know was supposed to sort of carry me through the next couple of months, and it was especially important 'cause my wife was six or seven months pregnant at the time. So, she was getting ready to go on mat-leave and I was ready to go back to a full-time career as a freelance journalist. So, all of that disappeared very quickly and you know by the end of March I did finish the first draft of my book, but I had no direction on where to go or what to do. You know freelancing was not going well. I was also hearing sort of horror stories from other freelancers about pay cuts being literally cut in half, a lot of stories like mine being deferred, put on the backburner, or killed completely, publications that were starting to go under – it seemed like a really bad time to return to what I know best which is, you know, freelance writing. That has been my bread and butter since 2012. So, I mean I started applying for some communications jobs for the first time in my life which was not something I ever thought I would do before the age of 40, but it just seemed like…it was just…it was just so shakey out there and then I never got any callbacks. So [laughs] I started to think okay I mean I never finish school or college, I don't have a degree, and that might have something to do with this, so I thought about maybe I need to go back to school and finish my degree. And this was probably like March 30th, because I had a conversation with my wife about it and you know she has always been very supportive, and you know, said we'll figure it out.

The next day I came up with the idea of, instead of going to school, starting a school [laughs], I don't know how that go figure how that happens but it just happened, I was just sort of looking around at everyone’s virtual lives and seeing how comfortable people were getting with Zoom and you know I'd done workshops online and I figured okay lets…you know I can take these workshops online, tickets raise a few hundred dollars and it'll just cover the bills for a few months until this pandemic is over and I never have to think about it again. And then the idea of packaging my workshops with other writers, who I know also have workshops together, and calling it something funny like Pandemic University popped in my head. That's when I realized that I actually might have like a business here, there might be a company here and that's how Pandemic University was born.

**SF**

So, you have this idea for the Pandemic University, what were the next steps? How do you go from that idea to actually implementing? Was there a big learning curve, whether for technical aspects or just organizing it?

**OM**

A few things you need to know about me is that I have a fair bit of experience with sort of web design, or you know, web layout. My first job, one of my first jobs rather, as a teenager was actually working for a website company doing some HTML and stuff. Now of course, web design has advanced quite a bit since then, but I've you know I've more or less kept up those skills. So you know, having a website designed and then being able to sort of take the keys and run it myself was not like difficult for me. And yeah…you know I have a little bit of video editing experience, so I was able to, you know after the webinar is recorded, able to edit it a little bit and then publish it online. So, I mean I had some of those technical, you know, experiences and being self employed as a freelancer, sort of you know, full time since 2012 and in some aspect since 2016, 15…going on 15 years. I also knew a little bit about how to run a business and like you know how to budget, basically.

I come from a family of self-employed, you know restaurant owners and stuff. So, there's a little bit of that, uh, in my blood, I think. So, it wasn't…wasn't abnormal for me to think about starting a company. Now as far as getting it off the ground, the way I work is very quickly or not at all. So, within a couple of hours of this idea I registered pandemicuniversity.com, all the social media handles and put a hold on the business name and then contacted two friends of mine, one a web designer and one a graphic designer, and got them on the case. You know I'd initially thought that this would cost me $2,000 to $3,000, and it could have, but then it like kind of exploded and so it ended up costing a lot more than that. But because it kind of exploded and became very profitable and so I had to sort of reinvest in the infrastructure to host, not just, you know 100 people maximum that I thought, but 500 people within a few weeks and now, I mean 3,500 people have attended Pandemic University classes. But all in all, I mean I had it from conception to launch and announcement in 13 days.

**SF**

Wow, that’s incredible!

**OM**

Yeah, I mean I had a lot of time on my hands. [laughs]

**SF**

[Laughs] That’s true. There have been a lot of incredible instructors that have taught classes as part of the Pandemic University. Whether it's poetry classes, memoirs, fiction, crime writing, what has been the response from kind of the general public of having access to all of these incredible writers?

**OM**

I'm glad that you brought that up. I'm very proud of the writer instructors who've taught at Pandemic University. They really are highly respected, sought-after writers first and foremost.

You know I didn't want to…I am a writer who also teaches, and I wanted to hire other writers who also teach. I wanted to really, you know, showcase writers. People who have a following, people who I think can also draw from like their contemporary experience in teaching, and I think that is a very effective way of teaching. Like it's good to draw from other works, but I think it is best to draw from your own work and your own experiences, your own mistakes and teaching. That's how I roll, and so that's sort of what I was hoping other people would do.

And then fundamentally, this whole thing launched as a way of helping writers, not just myself, but other freelancers who were meeting the same struggles as I was. And it was not supposed to be, you know, anything longer than a few weeks. I thought it would run, I think, 6 weeks and put, you know, a few hundred dollars in everyone’s pockets and that can cover like you know your phone and Internet bill, or you know for some people, just their phone bill. [laughs] But the intention was always to favour writers who were stiffed by the pandemic.

Nowadays, as the pandemics affects lesson, as people start to find their feet, it's less so about favoring writers who have been stiffed by the pandemic. I used to sort of, prioritize them when they would pitch me. I would have like a form that they would fill out with their pitch, but it would also ask questions about how they've been affected by the pandemic, whether that's you know losing a job or losing gigs, or having pay rates cut, or you know, I experienced this myself a little bit, but just not having childcare anymore because of daycare. Or you know your parents…you know not being able to visit your parents or whoever looks after them. That was my situation for the first few months, you know. Not having childcare basically meant that I couldn't work, like I couldn't write, you know. I had only a few hours a day, and you know, writing work is like…the environment required to write is very different from the environment required to sort of do administrative stuff, like I was doing with Pandemic University. So, in a way, Pandemic University made sense for me at that time, 'cause it was, you know, I could do that stuff with a lot of distractions in the room, as I needed to.

So anyway, writers would sort of, you know, fill out this questionnaire, and I was prioritizing them. Now it's really just about what they want to teach, an whether there's a demand for that and just sort of trying to have a little bit of a balance in what we offer, between nonfiction, journalism, fiction and sort of broadcast media, TV writing and podcast producing.

**SF**

One of the other benefits of the PanU, is the community that was built. The community has actually collectively raised over $7,000 for causes such as the Canadian Writers Emergency Relief Fund..

**OM**

Yeah, it's actually over $10,000 now.

**SF**

Oh wow, really?

**OM**

But yeah, I haven't updated the about page, but we've recently raised about $3,500 for the Kemosa Scholarship for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Mothers Who Write. It’s very niche but really great little scholarship writing prize that is given out in Alberta. And so yeah, we raised $3,500 with them, for them, with a webinar from Waubgeshig Rice on planning the novel.

**SF**

That's fantastic. How did these opportunities to support these organizations come about?

**OM**

When I launched it, I found that a couple of the people that I…that I reached out to initially to see if they had anything that they would…any webinars they want to teach. Some of them felt like, yeah, I do but you know I am lucky right now, I have a lot of work and I don't really need this, give it to, you know, give the opportunity to someone else. And then I suggested, well, why don't we use this class then as a fundraiser for the [Canadian Writers’ Trust of Canada Emergency Relief Fund], which they had launched for the pandemic, specifically. They were giving out $1,500, I guess, grants or supports to writers who were affected by COVID-19 pandemic. Just one of many great initiatives to support artists in this country.

So that was the first few fundraisers that were for the Emergency Relief Fund. And then, you know, after that it just became…it just became like a really cool way to build community, to give both the instructors and the students a chance to feel positive about, you know, their contribution and also get something in return, right? Like you know, the students don't just donate whatever they want to donate, 'cause these classes would be pay what you can or by donation, so you don't just get you know a webinar and a handy tip sheet from a writer you admire for you know whatever you pay 10 bucks, 20 bucks. Some people would put in 100 bucks if they could, but you also feel good about where that money is going and that you have supported storytellers just like yourself. So, from the Writers Trust I started to kind of just work with instructors about which charities, or just good causes, they wanted to support and some have included like PEN Canada and PEN International, the organization for persecuted writers and free expression, The [Canadian Association of Black Journalists] and I might have said that associations name wrong or got a couple words in disorder, what else…there's also the Media Girlfriends scholarship to send women and nonbinary students, who aspire to have a career in journalism in broadcast media, to school, and most recently the Kemosa one. There’s a few others, but yeah.

It's really about who the instructor or what causes the instructors are passionate about, and we just sort of organize it around that and work with the with the charities to, you know to try to raise…I guess you know to try to sell as many tickets by donation as possible and then just kind of raise awareness about what their cause is.

**SF**

That's a great initiative. I love that. It's been over a year, you now have alumni groups, merchandise, graduation parties, opportunities for people to watch previous classes. What does the future look like for Pandemic University?

**OM**

I think the future is really bright and strong, but kind of more low-key. The webinars that we launched with, these were, you know they were kind of MOOCs in that they would, you know, sort of “massive online something classes”, whatever the other “o”, in MOOC stands for. They would have somewhere between 100 to 150, sometimes even more, people in one room, and it would really be lecture based and then at the end there's a Q&A. We’ll still do a little bit of that, but you know, that was very much a consequence of people’s sort of self-isolation and um, you know, in their boredom with being at home and there need to have some sort of social connection. I think by the next spring, you know by this last spring, people were pretty zoomed out and more interested in watching those on their own time and there is just less interest in it in general and that makes complete sense.

Where people have sort of shifted their attention are to these more exclusive courses that we offer, so these are the multi-date courses. It's just like taking a course through the continued education department of any you know real university except that they are taught by people like Jana Pruden up the Globe and Mail or Courtney Kocak who is sort of this, you know, rockstar podcaster or Kaitlin Fontana, who is a highly respected TV writer and filmmaker. So, I think people's comfort level with virtual sort of, you know, learning or virtual working, I think that comfort level has made them realize that they actually can access an education from the comfort of their home, anywhere in the world. And so, these courses, which generally have about 12 to 16 people, are doing very well and we sell them all out. And the most recent one was a feature writing course with Richard Warnica that starting in the in the fall. We announced it less than a week ago, there is one seat left, it's probably sold out. By the time I check my email that last seat will, you know will probably be gone. So, there's still that appetite for it.

And you know that shouldn't surprise anyone, like online learning has been around for a very long time and you know all that Pandemic University is doing is kind of deformalizing it a little bit. You know you don't have to fill out some gigantic application and the prerequisites…there are there sometimes prerequisites and it's really based just kind of on your experience, but you know it's not…like you don't have to count credits and order transcripts, any of that stuff. And the offerings are always changing and they’re digestible. You know there are five classes, maybe, at most, maybe 8 classes. And you know, it's just kind of taking a lot of the friction and obstacles out of getting an adult, you know, sort of continued education.

MUSIC TRANSITION (5–6 SECONDS)

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**SF**

If you are interested in learning more about the Pandemic University School of Writing, you can find them online at pandemicuniversity.com. As well, be sure to check out Omar’s first book, *Praying to the West: How Muslims Shaped the Americas*, coming out this September with Simon & Schuster. If you would like to connect with Omar, you can find him on Twitter @OmarMouallem.

Our next guest, Bridget Canning, is an author of two books, *The Greatest Hits of Wanda Jaynes* and *Some People’s Children.* Living in St. John's, 2020 was an interesting year for Bridget as she navigated publishing her second book in May, celebrating the news that her first book would be adapted into a movie and attended book events and festivals online.

MUSIC TRANSITION (5–6 SECONDS)

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**SF**

Welcome Bridget.

Can you take us back to March of last year and your experience as the effects of the pandemic started taking shape? What were your initial thoughts as news travelled about the virus?

**Bridget Canning (BC)**

So yes, I guess I remember everything happening and at the time I was teaching, I teach communications at the College of North Atlantic and my courses were actually already distance learning, but with the shift to...in some ways I kind of initially thought this isn't going to have too much of an impact on me when they move everything online 'cause I'm already online. But of course, you know, students who are doing…learning courses are doing those for reasons because they have very busy schedules and they've already done all of their time management and things like that. So suddenly I had students, kind of panicking and needing extensions and things. So, I remember feeling like everyone had to kind of take a collective deep breath and kind of, just get rid of their kind of expectations of things, that everything was going to change.

Up until the lockdown, it had been kind of an odd winter, because I live in St. John's, Newfoundland. Of course, we had “snowmageddon”, I don't know if you heard about this, we had two meters of snow that landed in the three days of blizzards, so we were choked with snow. We had a state of emergency, I think for the first time. I think there was more snow than we've had in over 100 years or something. So, for about 10 days that winter we had a complete lockdown where everything shut down. You couldn't go to the grocery store, you couldn't… they were asking people not to leave their homes, it wasn't safe, things like that. So, in a way, it felt like we already had this kind of practice go. [Laughs] And then suddenly there was, you know, the pandemic.

I remember feeling kind of…I mean I think just that kind of collective worry, that you're worried about your friends who…especially my friends have kids, and suddenly all the kids are inside and weren’t able to socialize with each other, and this whole kind of new situation where, you know, children are having to learn from home and things like that so you know I think, we all, just kind of dived into…we tried to kind of release any kind of anxieties and expectations just ‘cause you kind of just…you don't know how long things are going to last or, what to expect, and I think there's kind of collective ennui [laughs] that everyone settled into. Either that or you just get frustrated all the time.

**SF**

Your second novel, *Some People’s Children*, was published in May 2020. Typically, book launches are celebrated with parties, press circuits and special events. What was it like to launch a book during a time of lockdown?

**BC**

I feel like just kind of releasing something into the wind, [laughs] and nothing ever…not knowing what happens or where it goes. Before with my first book, and any time I've ever had anything published, I think there's this feeling...I've talked to a couple of writers about this…like you're so happy and excited that something is…finally…that you've been working out for so long is being released, but you also have this kind of, you know, I wouldn't say panic, but you feel very, very vulnerable.

I've talked to a couple of friends, I remember I spoke to Lisa Moore and she said before she has…something's about to get published like she just paces like she's just full of you know, this kind of feeling vulnerable. And I always feel like with the first book and with this book, both times, I describe it like my guts were hanging out and everybody could see them. Everybody can see what you had for breakfast, [laughs] or what you're made of everyone can see what you're made of. So, I had that feeling and then, of course, so you know, the book kind of comes out and this book, it was my second book being published but was actually my first book I'd ever written, and I've been working on it for years and years. In fact, I had gone through a journal, and I had found from 2000, I had found little snippets of things that ended up being in the book. It was something I picked and put down, so I felt very much like it was something I've been living with for a long time that it was finally kind of putting out there. So, it felt very yeah, it felt like it was kind of put out into the ether.

I remember Breakwater Books got me to come in to sign books that had been for pre-order, but of course I couldn't actually go into the store. I couldn't go into the building really, so they set me up in the warehouse. So, I just sat in a warehouse by myself. [Laughs] Just sitting in this big cement room, you know, with a mask on and disinfecting my hands and gently touching the books and opening them and signing them. And then they would put them all the place, I guess to sit there, you know, untouched for a while.

So yeah, I think there was, you know, I think when you're looking forward to the launch and you're looking forward to talking to people and connecting and things like that, both to celebrate something I've been working on for so long, but also to kind of really alleviate the kind of panic and wonder ability that you've been feeling, since you're kind of putting it in the world and neither of the things really had an opportunity to happen. So, it felt kind of like yeah, like kind of…just went out into the ether and evaporated. [Laughs]

**SF**

Strange feeling, definitely. So, we've talked with organizers for events, but I'm curious to hear the perspective from an author of attending virtual events and doing panels and being able to stay home and be able to attend these and have conversations about books and writing. What has your experience been with that?

**BC**

In some ways it's been a positive experience because you are…you do kind of feel like you maybe connecting with maybe a larger…a wider range of people because people will stay at home and things like geography and distance and accessibility and things like that seem to be lesser of an issue, 'cause we're not physically together. But as I said, I've been teaching for the past 17 years, so shifting into teaching online where you, and again you just feel like you're kind of…you're not able to have that face-to-face comfort of nonverbal cues and things like that. It also felt very isolating like you're just, you're just talking to yourself in a room. [Laughs] And you wrote the book by yourself in a room. [Laughs] So, you’re still alone. [Laughs] So, it was…in some ways it felt like a wider…it felt like quantity over quality, anyway, like you're able to hopefully reach out to more people and have something that's online that people can watch and rewatch at their leisure. But also, that kind of moment that intimacy and that kind of the comfort of being together felt very isolating.

**SF**

So, I saw that in October 2020 you actually did a live reading with an audience. Was that like going back to in-person?

**BC**

It was, it was great. I mean here in Newfoundland we've been lucky as our cases… we have had lockdowns and things like that, but at the time I think we were at level 2, which means that you could have gatherings. So, it was…it was a limited capacity and of course people had to sit in the audience, so they were very spaced out. So, it's you know, it’s downtown St. John’s. I live in downtown St John’s, it’s very community oriented. You know everybody, so you kind of come in…because it’s that space, I was like oh I know exactly who's here. [Laughs] And it was lovely, but of course you're not able to…you not able to mingle and you're not able to get close to each other to touch. So, it was lovely to be able to read out loud and get those kind of reactions from audiences. Like someone laughs or somebody, you know, has facial expressions and things like that. So, in some ways it was very, very nice, but there was still that kind of atmosphere. I don't want to say fear, but yeah fear you know…and trying to be aware and respectful of boundaries and all these new regulations and protocols. So, it was wonderful, but it was also a different, a very different kind of reading, of course. You know you're not able to…you don't have the freedom to kind of just move around the room and of course it's a lot, for these readings, who’s in the audience are other writers. And other writers come out because they want to talk to other writers. They were all kind of sick of being alone and in our own heads, so it's such a nice…those opportunities are so great to network and to just exchange ideas and to vent and things like that. So it felt limited, it felt like just…I kind of wish it had been outside, you know, but no it was…it was great and there was live music and things afterwards with Lawnya Vawnya Festival which combines a lot of different forms of art, music and literature and visual arts performance and stuff like that so it was great.

**SF**

There are a lot of assumptions from people about how the pandemic has affected writers, especially with this idea that writers just need more time to spend writing. But I know from many conversations is that writers have been affected so differently under these circumstances. Some were able to benefit from the additional time, while others have lost out on a place to write or struggled with the disconnection. How have you been affected with writing during this?

**BC**

It definitely had a toll in the first six months or so because my whole routine…especially because as part of my routine is I do like to go out to…I don't really…it’s never been a matter of time or privacy or anything that for me fortunately, but I get inspired by other people. I get inspired to listening to conversations and watching people and things like that, and I'm, you know, I’m kind of very externally focused. I'm not…I wouldn't describe myself as an extrovert or introvert. I’m kind of like, if that's even if such a thing, I'm kind of a seesaw. Like I'll go…I'll go out to, you know a couple of parties and social events, and feel like oh I need to come back, I need my solitude and then after a couple days, I’m like where are my friends? [Laughs] But not being able to have any of those options, you know, just something like going to a coffee shop or sitting in a park, we couldn't go to parks or anything, so just it felt very…and of course this is March in Newfoundland, so spring here is just three months of the weather playing with your emotions. Like there's just so much fog and the weather changes so much, so it's even going for a walk or something like that can be…and of course, like I said, we had a ton of snow, so in some places the sidewalks still weren't even cleared off, you know? So, it was just so hard to get around, so it felt very much like you were just in this crawl space with such limited places to go.

And so, like I said, from my own writing practice, it just suddenly felt like I had…the only choice was to kind of sit in my office. And of course, you know my spouse is here. Everyone is kind of, well, kind of…you have no choice but to kind of rattle around in your house or your apartment or your room and for me, I just didn't write as much. I journaled a fair bit, I was lucky that way. I did make a point of writing down…like things I was worried about in the news and stuff like that. So, I think when I'm ready to write about pandemic stuff, I have a fair bit of my own ideas and entries and things with that. But no, it definitely…I definitely wasn't writing as much and I wasn't running things that I felt that were quality and I watched a lot of comfort shows. If that's the term. [Laughs]

**SF**

During such a weird year, you've also had quite a lot of exciting news to share, such as *Some People's Children* being selected as a finalist for the 2020 BMO Winterset Award in the Thomas Randall Award, and your first novel, *The Greatest Hits of Wonder James* being adapted into a film, were you able to find ways to celebrate these accomplishments?

**BC**

Yes and no. Like part of me it was…you know, I think I did a lot of cooking so you know, I probably cooked a couple of fancy meals and things like that to celebrate. I guess you kind of look for ways that you can kind of give yourself a little pat on the back here and there, but I mean not the way you want to, with you know, a party or friends or going out somewhere bumping into people. But in some ways, it just felt like it was kind of prolonged because you didn't…you know you're able to… I got lots and lots of really kind, wonderful messages from people. I think people went out…when something like that happens…people go out of their way to…if someone can’t actually speak to you in person, they regard the right to send you a message or something. So, in some ways it was that there wasn't like that kind of one moment where you want to pop a bottle of champagne and share it with a bunch of people or something like that.

So, it was kind of…kind of more prolonged kind of…but you know, I sometimes I think, like when everyone is feeling safer and we're able to do things, I think there's going to be a lot of celebrations. Like I think people are going to have, like let's celebrate all of our birthdays [Laughs] today or you know, I think there's going to be a lot of commemorative occasions for both sad and happy things that happened over the past year and a half so.

**SF**

As things are starting to open up and numbers are dropping, is there anything that you're looking forward to coming back and being able to do again?

**BC**

I am looking forward to going to somewhere where you can listen to live music and dance. [Laughs] Just like…that's something like I think when that comes back, that would make me…and people can do it safely…that would make me feel like, okay, we're on the other side. I'm very lucky that I'm able to go to a couple of literary festivals this summer. In August, I'm going to the Winterset in Summer festival in Eastport and I'm going to Writers at Woody Point in Gros Morne…which are going to be, you know, I think limited capacity of things, but just to be able to meet some people in network and kind of you know, different location. I'm looking at…like I said, I'm looking forward to being carefree, you know, like I said, being able to just kind of pop into a bar where there's a band and people are dancing and you know it's just kind of casual, I think is something to be able to do that and without nagging worries, and you know, actual danger is something I'm looking forward to.

MUSIC TRANSITION (5–6 SECONDS)

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**SF [OUTRO]**

Both of Bridget’s novels are available through the publisher Breakwater Books. You can also find more about her at Bridgetcanning.com.

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