

Episode 318

[00:00:00] **Vicky:** Hello, and welcome to notes in the margin. I am Vicky Quinn Fraser, and this is my husband and faithful sidekick, Joe.

[00:00:10] **Joe:** Hello?

[00:00:12] **Vicky:** hello?

[00:00:13] **Joe:** Hello.

[00:00:15] **Vicky:** We've just been having a discussion about, um, being tired and sitting up straight and having no room for elbows. Mm

[00:00:21] **Joe:** Vicky in her customary uh, way of organizing things has occupied all of the horizontal space. available

[00:00:27] **Vicky:** that's this is literally my office. Yes,

[00:00:31] **Joe:** and also our house. That's very true.

Very true.

[00:00:35] **Vicky:** Not true. Um, anyway. Hello. Hello. Uh, so what are you reading at the moment, Joe? Um,

[00:00:43] **Joe:** I should have prepared because I really don't know.

[00:00:46] **Vicky:** Is it pre-study?

[00:00:47] **Joe:** No, I ditched that.

[00:00:49] **Vicky:** Oh yeah, you didn't, you were not enjoying it, were you?

[00:00:50] **Joe:** No, I didn't get it. I kind of, it kind of felt like a book that I was supposed to know. The author and this book was filling in the

backstory, but I didn't [00:01:00] know who the author was.

[00:01:01] **Vicky:** Oh, okay. Interesting.

[00:01:02] **Joe:** It kind of felt like I was supposed to have been reading their blog for the last 10 years or something. And I just, haven't

[00:01:06] **Vicky:** interesting. I will read it cuz I, that interests me that idea. Um, I mean maybe it was written for people who know her. Yeah. I don't know.

[00:01:13] **Joe:** Really did feel that way to me. So I was like, I don't know who you are. Don't get it.

[00:01:16] **Vicky:** Okay, cool.

[00:01:17] **Joe:** Um, so I'm reading something else and I have no idea what it is.

[00:01:20] **Vicky:** Oh no

[00:01:20] **Joe:** That's bad. Isn't that? I just picked it up out of the massive stack of stuff that you've surrounded our bed with.

[00:01:27] **Vicky:** Joe, I feel a little bit attacked. a little bit attacked. Yeah.

[00:01:33] **Joe:** Sorry about that.

[00:01:34] **Vicky:** You don't look very sorry.

[00:01:35] **Joe:** I'm not very sorry.

[00:01:37] **Vicky:** Um, especially as I have tidied up in everything today, while you've been out what I've washed up.

[00:01:46] **Joe:** Right after, after making some dishes dirty. okay. I mean, that's, that's that's good. Well, anyway, um, what are you reading?

[00:01:55] **Vicky:** I am reading, um, the Thursday murder club. Okay. By

Richard [00:02:00] Osman.

[00:02:00] **Joe:** I read that last week.

[00:02:01] **Vicky:** I know you did. And um, I decided that I wanted something, you know, a little bit Agatha Christie and I didn't like the first few pages.

I was just like, oh, I dunno about this. Um, and now I really like it. I just think his descriptions, in fact, if I'm gonna recommend it for people who wanna write better, uh, or more interesting creative non-fiction as well, because even though it's fiction his descriptions of people and, and situations are really beautiful.

Um, and you know, that is a technique that is just as useful in non-fiction as it is in fiction. Good. Yeah.

[00:02:39] **Joe:** Glad you're enjoying it.

[00:02:40] **Vicky:** I am enjoying it.

[00:02:40] **Joe:** That was, that was an airport book. That was,

[00:02:42] **Vicky:** yeah, I'm enjoying it. I'm really enjoying it. Um, I'm also reading, um, my non-fiction is I'm reading the latest actually.

It's not even the latest issue of slightly Foxed because I've let them pile up a little bit. So, um,

[00:02:54] **Joe:** on all the horizontal surfaces,

[00:02:56] **Vicky:** no, Joe. Um, and so I have been [00:03:00] reading that today and, um, that is it's literary. It's a literary. Journal. And they it's little essays written by people about books that they've read.

And they're usually books that are lesser known. So then they don't talk about like the latest, big blockbusters and stuff. Um, and it usually culminates in me going in search of, of one of the books. And that is

exactly what I've done. So I've ordered the book today.

[00:03:25] **Joe:** Yeah, it does not surprise me. Um, we'll add it to the pile.

[00:03:28] **Vicky:** Yes. Well, I need a library.

[00:03:30] **Joe:** We're working on it.

[00:03:31] **Vicky:** I know. So yeah. Update Dingle update because I know everybody is extremely interested, um, super interest. I feel like they are actually, it is interesting what we're doing, but we have been simultaneously delighted and enraged with, um, our latest bathroom developments, um, because our plastered walls are beautiful.

They've done a glorious job, um, of plastering the walls. They're the window returns are rounded and gorgeous and there's crisp lines everywhere. It's just very lovely. [00:04:00] And as part of the, um, arrangements, part of what we are paying them for, um, notes, the. Are going to pay them for, um, is that they were gonna fit the Oak window sills as well.

Mm-hmm so like, oh, we'll do all that because they fit the window sills and then plaster around them.

[00:04:16] **Joe:** Yeah. Which makes sense because otherwise you're kind of cutting bits of timber to fit in. You know, it makes perfect sense to plaster a. Yes after the window. sills are in

[00:04:24] **Vicky:** yes.

And so at first glance, everything was lovely and dandy and beautiful.

And then we got the sanders out to sand and oil and generally make the window sills look beautiful. And we noticed that they had bodged them in and made a right fucking mess, frankly. Yeah. And, um, it was just, it was really upsetting for a couple of reasons, firstly, because it's beautiful Oak and I don't see how they're gonna salvage one of the pieces because mm-hmm um,

[00:04:48] **Joe:** they fucked it up.

[00:04:49] **Vicky:** Yes, they did. Yeah. It's really sloppy. And I just feel like they did it and were like, ah, they won't notice. Yeah. And it is like, would that be acceptable in your [00:05:00] house? Absolutely not. And. You know, a stranger would walk into the bathroom and never notice. And I will know it's there every single time. And we are building pretty much building most of this house, ourselves with our own hands.

[00:05:11] **Joe:** And we would not have done that.

[00:05:13] **Vicky:** We would not have done that. And we would've done a much better job.

[00:05:15] **Joe:** We would've done a slower job and we would've thought about it and we wouldn't taken ages, but yeah, we wouldn't have had those mistakes in it.

[00:05:21] **Vicky:** Now I'm hoping that what's gonna happen is they'll come and have a look and be like, oh yeah, that's really out of order.

We're gonna put that right. Um, at our expense and trouble and we're gonna. Do the beautiful job that we should have done in the first place. I really hope that's what happens. I'm gearing up for a fight because tradesman in it. Yeah. And, and if, if there are any tradesman listening, this is why we hate working with you, dudes.

this is why, because it's like, just, just don't be sloppy. Like, imagine you were doing this job for yourself. And, and I know, I know hashtag not all tradesman, blah, whatever, but this is [00:06:00] why you have the reputation that you have and why people just kind of steal themselves before having to do any work.

It's also why we're doing most of the work ourselves.

[00:06:09] **Joe:** And if, you know, if the dude couldn't do it should have timber was not what he was expecting or the job was not what he was expecting or the whatever he should have said.

[00:06:18] **Vicky:** Um, do you know what. None of that's true because I was there when we were looking at the bit of Oak, when I was looking at the bit of Oak with him and I was like, oh, is this all okay?

It's like, yeah, absolutely. I can do whatever you want. It's all, you know, easy, fine, and done. It's just fit in windows sills. So my eye rolling is extreme and yeah. So we'll stay tuned to find out what happens there.

[00:06:36] **Joe:** That'll be fun.

[00:06:37] **Vicky:** Yeah. I'm really hoping that that'll just be like, oh yeah, sorry about that.

That's that's terrible. We'll fix it.

[00:06:41] **Joe:** That's a bit chunky.

[00:06:42] **Vicky:** I really hope that's what happens. um, and that is by the way, the appropriate response to this kind of issue, whatever your business is. Um, and you know, I've had people come back to me before and be like, I'm not happy with this. And I'm, I've been like, let's put it right.

Mm. You know, let's put it right. I take, even if it's not my fault, I
[00:07:00] still take responsibility for it because yeah. It's my business. So, um, anyway, so that was that that's a ding update, but the walls do look beautiful. They do. And we have, and the, the, the window sills would

[00:07:11] **Joe:** from a distance, they look great. Yeah.

[00:07:13] **Vicky:** And they will be beautiful. Um, but yeah, details details. So, um, also the Strat fan is fitted and not extract. Fan is fitted. Anyway,

[00:07:22] **Joe:** electrical apprentice did very well in the, in the attic.

[00:07:25] **Vicky:** That's me, by the way. I'm the electrical apprentice. Yeah. Um, also spent quite a lot of time squeezed into a small space,

which is not my favorite thing.

um, but I'm the small person, so, yeah. Anyway, so right. We are talking today about your table of contents and how it is like a burlesque show. So

[00:07:46] **Joe:** a table of contents, right? Yeah. Does every book have a table of contents?

[00:07:50] **Vicky:** No.

[00:07:51] **Joe:** When does a book have a table of contents?

[00:07:53] **Vicky:** Well, I'm gonna say something controversial.

I'm gonna use the should word. In my opinion, almost [00:08:00] every book should have a table of contents.

[00:08:01] **Joe:** Are we talking nonfiction book nonfiction?

[00:08:03] **Vicky:** Yes. Okay. Fiction. I mean, you know what, it's your book, it's your book and you can do what you want. And if, you know, if a client of mine was like, I really don't want a table of contents and they could argue their point as to why not, I'd be like, No problem, it's your book.

But for example, there is a book called on how to speak well by Peggy Newan. And I wanted to dip in and find something and I couldn't, cuz there's no table of contents and there's no index. And that really irritated me. Cause I knew I knew the thing that I wanted to go and find.

[00:08:36] **Joe:** And I, we had no means to do so short of reading the whole book.

[00:08:40] **Vicky:** Yeah. So, so that, that I have just said is a really good reason for you to have a table of content that said , you can have a bit of fun with it because, um, this is one of the things that I love about, um, writing your own book and publishing your own book as well, and not being, you know, beholden to what the, the publishing Gods decide that

they wanna do if, if you're going with a, a big [00:09:00] publisher.

Right. So, um, but yeah, if you think about how, how you, how you read a, how you choose a book, you look at the front cover, flip it over and read the back cover. And then usually you open it up and have a scan at the table of contents. Right? If you are buying a non-fiction book, I mean, yeah, maybe. Um, if you're me, you'll open it to a random page in the middle and read it as well.

[00:09:20] **Joe:** I do that as well.

[00:09:21] **Vicky:** Yeah. Um, but um, I also read the table of contents and that's what most people do. And you have a little scan down and it's like, okay, well, that's what the book says. It's about on, you know, the cover and the, and the back blurb and stuff. And then you open it up and have a quick scan at the table of content.

And it should give you an idea of what you're gonna get. You know, where you are gonna be taken as a reader, um, through the book. So it has two functions. Your table of contents is that's the first one it's like to help your reader figure out where things are and make it easy for them to find stuff. And mm-hmm, , you know, give them a idea of what's in it, but also, um, it's, it is there to help you as well because you know, having creating a table of contents really early on that isn't fixed in stone, [00:10:00] by the way, you can change it.

But creating that early on gives you. Like a roadmap to write to, it gives you a structure to write to mm-hmm . And even if you are a fast and loose type person, having a structure is a really useful thing. You don't have to stick to it. Um, you can change it as you go along, but just having somewhere to start is really, really super useful.

And so. . I always get people to at least have some kind of a loose structure before they start writing. Um, and you know, you can come back later on because I, I know a lot of people and actually I'm doing this, doing this with the books that I'm writing at the moment. I have no table of content. I have no structure.

I've got an idea of what I want to do. And at the moment I'm just writing

stuff, but I know that at some point in the not too distant future, I'm gonna sit down and gonna need a structure. Think about, yeah. Think about what the structure is. So I, and, and that's why I'm saying at some point you're gonna.

need one. Um, depending on what type of book you're writing and stuff, you know, some books, it makes a lot of sense to do it, right. at the start of the process and other books, like the one that I'm writing at the moment, um, makes more sense for me to, to do it a little [00:11:00] bit later, but that moment is coming, but, so why is it a burlesque show?

Well, because

[00:11:05] **Joe:** what, why is it a burlesqu show?

[00:11:08] **Vicky:** Yeah. Why is your table of contents? A burlesque show. Okay. Because it is a little tease for your reader. , it was like, you know, in a burlesque show when the burlesque dancer is like, oh, here is my ankle and my foot and then we're wearing a stocking and they take their shoe off and then they're like, bring their skirt up a little bit.

And it's like, oh, here's a bit of ankle and, oh, here's my knee. And, oh, I'm just gonna peel my stocking off. Right. And it's like a little promise of what's to come. It's the whole point of a burlesque show. Right. Okay. Yeah. Um, so like, Yeah, feather, Bower, stockings gloves imagined. I peeling off to reveal a little bit of skin here and there.

Um, a little sexy elbow. Um, and that's your table of contents. That's what your table of contents is doing. Sexy elbow, sexy elbow. Yeah. Table of contents.

[00:11:52] **Joe:** Your table of contents is the sexy elbow of your book is the sexy elbow of your book?

[00:11:56] **Vicky:** Yes.

[00:11:57] **Joe:** Okay. Put that in the show notes,

[00:11:59] **Vicky:** I'm [00:12:00] actually gonna clip this audio clip out

and people are gonna be like, what the fuck?

Um, so yeah, your table of content, because as I said, you start on the front cover, turn to the back, turn aside, have a quick look at the table of contents. And that's the thing that's really most of the time gonna make the, if you're not sure have, after having looked at the covers, it's gonna be like, oh, I really like the look of what's in this table of contents.

I'd like to buy the book and take it out for dinner and, you know, take it home. You know, read it in bed.

[00:12:30] **Joe:** Analogy's getting a bit strange.

[00:12:32] **Vicky:** Your face is a bit strange. Um, thanks. It's right. Um, so yes, so that's what it does feel. That's what it does for your answer. Your, your face is lovely. Um, that's what it does for your reader. Um, and also for you, I've already mentioned, I'm kind of going around the circles a little bit here, but I'm hoping that dear listener know that this makes some kind of sense.

Um, so yes, for you it's, um, It's like a, you know, it gives you, it gives you a place to start mm-hmm so you don't [00:13:00] have to start at the beginning as a writer, as a writer. Yeah. It gives you a place to start. You don't have. And the great thing is it, it means once you've got this loose table of contents and this loose structure, you don't even have to start at the beginning and you don't have to start at the end.

You can look at it and go what looks most appealing to me today? That, that thing. And there, I can write that. Yeah. Um, and that's also a really useful thing and that's something that you don't have if you don't have any kind of a, a structure it's like, well, I, I feel like I've gotta start at the beginning or I've gotta start at the end.

um, but actually I don't wanna do either of those two things. So let's give you a few more options, you know, mm-hmm um, so yes. Um, I've already talked about that. Um, I've already talked about

that.

[00:13:39] **Joe:** So how, how much detail do you go into in your table of contents? I mean, is it, is it like a. It's it's more than chapter headings, right?

[00:13:45] **Vicky:** Yeah. So I mean, yes. And this is the thing that I love about table of contents. So if you have a look at my book, which is called, how the hell do you write a book and you can buy that in all good book shops. Actually, I dunno if that's true, you can definitely buy it from my website on [00:14:00] Amazon. Um um, and you should as well.

It's good. People have said, so other than me. Hmm. And you, um, What were we, what was I talking

about?

[00:14:12] **Joe:** Table of contents? How much, what, what,

how much detail did you go?

[00:14:15] **Vicky:** Yeah. Okay. So when you are first, so we're moving on a bit. Now, when you've first written your table of contents, it can be very descriptive.

So it's like chapter one. What are gloves? Chapter two types of gloves. Chapter three. How to make a thumb? I don't know, whatever. Um, so , it's a glove, a glove about books. It's glove about books, right? Yeah. And so you can just be very descriptive for your own purposes for the outline. But when you come to actually make a table of contents, that is gonna go into the final book, you can make it more fun and you should do, because each of your table of contents, headings should be like a little miniature headline.

Right? So like your book title is a headline for the book. The book title on the subtitle is like, [00:15:00] oh, you know, um, literally can't think of one oh, hang on. I've got a book right here. Hang. This is a good one. Um, the art of memoir by Mary Carr. Um, and so that tells you very simply what the book is about.

It's about memoir. Um, I don't know if she's got a subtitle. She does not

have a subtitle. This is terrible example. Um, anyway, so there'll be a subtitle that kind of, that her, her title. She doesn't need a subtitle because it's very obvious what the book is about. Um, but if you had a book that. Say called the Chimp paradox, which is an actual book by professor.

Someone, oh my God, I can't remember his name anyway. Um, but he needs, he needs a subtitle because the Chimp paradox is an intriguing title. Doesn't really tell you about mm-hmm what the book's about, unless you know something about the Chimp brain and all that kind of thing. And it's, you know, most people don't.

So, so you need a subtitle. Anyway, you need to do a similar thing [00:16:00] with your chapter titles in your table of contents. So they need to be both descriptive and interesting enough to make the reader want to read on. And so for example, I really should have prepared better for this. Um, I'm gonna use my book as an example because I can open it on my computer without standing up and finding a different book.

So, okay.

We have. Chapter one is the beating heart of your business. Um, that is the chapter title. And it's all about why you wanna write a book for your business and all the rest of it. And, um, this is one of my friends said, um, when she was writing her book is kinder. Hi, kinder. Hi, kinder. Um, she said. That after she'd written her book, she felt like it was the beating heart of her business.

Mm-hmm and that was a really lovely description. Um, and then another chapter title is called embrace the shitty first draft, [00:17:00] um, which, you know, is a bit more interesting than write your first draft. Sure. Um, or your first draft or your first draft yeah. Um, find your weirdos. More interesting than who are you writing for?

So you wanna, you wanna be thinking about it like that, but when you've actually got your table of contents, um, and I don't think I've got it in, do not think I've got it here, but I decided that I was gonna turn my table of contents into a little mini story for each chapter mm-hmm . So I had like

the chapter title, so to be funny or not, to be funny, and then underneath, I had a bunch of.

Just little headings. I've got my book right behind me. Just realized that would be much easier. This is one of my more professional podcasts.

[00:17:47] **Joe:** It is well put together this one.

[00:17:49] **Vicky:** Okay. So. Chapter nine outline like a boss page 113 of my book. And then just underneath that, I've got this, you have to warm up all, you'll get hurt, how to enjoy writing [00:18:00] the Moxy book, blueprint, organizing your ideas, the table of contents, a scrapbook and Alin trap.

So that is a just, is just a sequence of little descriptors for what else is in the chapter. And it just gives you an idea of what's in there. If I was gonna do this again. I would go even further and turn each of those little snippets into a little miniature story. Mm-hmm so rather than just being like a series of descriptive, um, titles and words, I would tell a little mini story of the chapter within, within there.

Um, just partly because it's fun, partly because it's a really useful exercise for you to do, because it gives you a really tight idea of what's gonna be in your chapter. Um, and partly it's interesting for the reader as well. So you can have a little bit of fun with that. Maybe write a ha. Write a little poem.

I don't know, do a doodle there's it is your book and you can do all sorts of things with it. And that's what I, that's what I love about it. So,

[00:18:50] **Joe:** but do more than just give us the chapter headings in a list with page numbers. Yeah.

[00:18:55] **Vicky:** Yeah. I mean, at the very bare minimum do that um, but you can do better.

You've gotta [00:19:00] think about it as being, um, think about it as being this burlesque dancer. Think about it as selling each chapter, you

have to sell the reader on each chapter, even if you're not writing. Um, a book that's designed to help you, you know, sell more, you know, do more in your business, even fiction writers.

Every sentence has gotta make you wanna read the next one. Mm-hmm because otherwise you're just gonna stop reading. Um, so it's really, really important. And the, the chapter headings and the chapter titles and the table of contents is all part of that. So you wanna be thinking about all of that stuff and plus it's a little bit more fun as well.

And remember, you don't have to get it right. First time, just start with a basic descript. Yeah, don't try and don't try and write the perfect, um, table of contents, cuz you'll never write anything.

[00:19:43] **Joe:** Certainly don't get hung up on it and, and

[00:19:45] **Vicky:** absolutely not because your, for your perfect table of contents heading your chapter title will almost certainly come for the most part after you've written the chapter, because it'll probably, it might be a line that comes out that is like a really good line or an idea that comes out of it or something like that.

So, [00:20:00] um, right. Yeah. So pick up your feather Bower, put on some dancing music and crack on with. sexy elbow table of contents. Cool. Do so. Yeah. Right then what else? Um, oh, I've got some templates to help you do that. There you go. Um, you can get my templates from <https://moxiebooks.co.uk/start-your-book-templates>

each of those pauses will for you to stick a little dash in the start.

[00:20:30] **Joe:** Hyphen your hyphen book, hyphen templates. Yeah.

[00:20:33] **Vicky:** Um, Yes. So you can get those from my website and you should, because they're really cool. Um, somebody said that my templates were the only things that had ever helped her to start writing her book and she'd tried loads of tools and templates and things.

So I was pretty pleased with that. Cool. Um, and yeah. Oh, and this is going out. Early September mm-hmm . And at the time of recording, I

have enough space for four [00:21:00] more people to do a book breakthrough jam with me. Okay. Which is a 90 minute. Um, 90 minutes. Um, mini coaching session to get your book started.

Basically you can find out more about that at www.moxiebooks.co.uk/bookbreakthrough is a really cool thing. Um, I'm really proud of it. Everyone who's done them has been like, oh my God, this has been the best thing. I never thought I'd get started or feel good about my book. And now I'm really excited about it.

Um, have some testimonials on my website, so you can go read that. Yeah.

[00:21:31] **Joe:** Endorsements are available at moxiebooks.co.uk

[00:21:33] **Vicky:** UK. Yep.

Um, and I really love doing them as well. They're so much fun. Um, so if you, if you wanna get your book started and you can't figure out how, let me ask you a question. Do you have time to figure it out yourself?

How long have you spent figuring it out? So. How are you getting on with that? If you are stuck, ask for help, get someone pay an expert to help you with it, whether it's me or somebody else I'd like it to meet me obviously. But, um, I'm not for everyone, so that's cool. Um, but yeah, don't waste [00:22:00] any more time trying to figure this shit out yourself.

Life is short. Do it now. Get on with it. Yeah. Um, thanks for listening. Joe. Thanks for helping me. No worries at all. Um, pod fly. Thank you for making this sound great, Harriet. Thank you for slipping things out and generally, um, helping me to organize my shit. And if you have liked this episode, go and rate and reviewers

[00:22:23] **Joe:** subscribe, recommend a friend.

[00:22:24] **Vicky:** Yeah. Please send it to a friend. Actually. That's the best thing you could possibly do. If you want to support the podcast, send it to a friend who you think might enjoy it. Send it to two friends.

All of your friends, all of your friends. Um, and yeah, we would really like that. And if you've got any questions, give us a shout, drop a question to vicky@moxiebooks.co.uk

we would love to answer it on air. Yeah. And when my new website is live, which it might be by the time, um, this goes out, there will be a voice recording function on my podcast page. So you can actually ask me a question with your face switch. Yeah, [00:23:00] I know. Right? So, um, you can be on my podcast. That would be cool.

Hmm. I would love that. Um, right. I'm going all right. Let's start. Thank you so much for listening everyone piece out. We'll be back next week talking about, oh my good God, something else? Yeah. Talking about, I don't know, stuff. Yeah. Maybe publishing traditional or self-publishing. Are you being impatient?

Yeah. Oh my God. Joe is like gesticulating wildly here in the background. Like I'm a really annoying person. I can't imagine why

[00:23:31] **Joe:** it's just the, the complete professionalism and, and readiness for this recording.

[00:23:36] **Vicky:** It's what the listeners have come to expect.

[00:23:38] **Joe:** It is what the listeners have. Sadly come to expect

[00:23:41] **Vicky:** if they want professional podcasts, other podcasts are available.

I I'm going now. Goodbye.

[00:23:48] **Joe:** Bye!