



Episode 1,793: Michael Malice and Tom on Writing and Publishing Books

Guest: Michael Malice

WOODS: It's been a while. I was just on your show, but I want to talk about something not directly related to the usual sorts of current events topics that we might cover, but instead, kind of an evergreen topic that I think might be of interest to some people. Because you and I have both written multiple books —

MALICE: Yeah, but mine aren't free.

WOODS: [laughing] That's true, so they'll get a variety perspectives today.

MALICE: [laughing] Mine are physical.

WOODS: I have some physical books, you bastard.

MALICE: Yeah, yeah —

WOODS: More than you. All right, anyway, I'm just thinking back to before I ever wrote a book when I was, let's say in like junior high or high school. The idea of writing a book didn't really cross my mind. But when I would think about what an author had done, it would seem to me to be just a Herculean task, just impossible. I mean, who could write that much about something? I couldn't imagine it. And then when I started becoming an author, I was reminded of Richard Nixon's thing that he said of one of his books, that writing a book is the biggest workout somebody can give to one's brain. Maybe, maybe not, but it is a big deal. And because it seems so impossible, I wanted to talk to you about how you do it, like the actual nuts and bolts of what you do, how you come up with a topic for a book. When you come up with that topic, do you already know everything there is — I think I used to assume that every author sat down, already had all the knowledge in his head, and just it was a matter of putting it on the paper. So let's start from the beginning.

MALICE: Can we have one episode of the show when you're not asking me about my nuts?

WOODS: [laughing] Well, I guess we'll have to start next time.

MALICE: [laughing] Next time? This relationship is over. It's Splitsville, baby. I'm gonna vamoose.

WOODS: I don't know what the heck you do —

MALICE: [laughing] This is what happens when you schedule an interview with me first thing on Monday.

WOODS: I was just thinking that. I was just thinking, what do you do to get started in the day? Because whatever it is, it works.

MALICE: [laughing] Oh, this is not working. No, I'm teasing.

WOODS: Do you feel comfortable saying at least something about the topic of the project or working on?

MALICE: Oh, no, I'll be glad to answer your question, and I think it's a very good one. It's a very useful one. And I don't think it's not going to be one people are going to be able to apply, because you and I have written many books, and after a while, just like if someone's a standup comedian, the delivery becomes mechanized – not mechanized in the sense of robotic, but your body knows how to go through the motions without thinking about it. This is like MMA athletes, it's the same thing. They're not thinking, oh, well if I'm in a Kimora, I've got to do this move to spin out of it. The body knows instinctively what to do, and they train themselves by going through these motions repetitively to the point where it's automatized. They don't have to do much thinking during the process, which speeds things along.

So I write – I hate this word, because it's been so corrupted, but I write organically, which is, I sit down – and I've written an article about this, how to write I think, somewhere in Thought Catalog. And I sit down, and I just kind of spew. And a lot of times, there'll be certain things that I know I want to have in the book. And I'll just hit two spaces, two line breaks. And just write that. And so by the time that first draft is done, it's a mess. It is an absolute mess. But I know, it's all there like a jigsaw puzzle. And it's a lot easier to do a jigsaw puzzle than to like make a painting, if you think about it, from scratch. So that's kind of the process there.

Like writing *The White Pill*, which I'm doing now, has been very laborious, because the book has completely changed in its conception from when I started writing. The way I thought of this book was my buddy Ryan Holiday took the wisdom of the Stoics, the ancient Stoics, that he's basically made a little cottage industry out of them. I'm not saying that in a disparaging way. He's got several books, *Ego Is the Enemy*, *The Obstacle Is the Way*, and he applied stoic philosophy to contemporary times. And the books are short, very pithy, full of ancient wisdom and so on.

And I thought someone should do this with one of my favorite philosophers, Albert Camus. And Camus is a philosopher of absurdism, but he also has this very kind of hopefulness to him, and he's also teeth grinding in terms of his advocacy of conscience, living by your conscience. And the book that I wanted to kind of update to contemporary times was *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Well, I read it recently in preparation for doing this. I hadn't read it since college, you know, 60 years ago. And it is not at all the book I remembered, at all, at all, at all. Maybe I'm remembering *The Rebel*, but like, then I'm like, okay, I'm going to write the book that I thought I had read or that Camus should have read.

But as I'm writing it, one of the things people often ask me is, you know, *The White Pill* is this kind of spirit of optimism, that the good guys are going to win. They often ask me – I hate this Pollyanna, saccharin, "everything is going to be great," "you can do it." I'm like, no, no,

no, I have reasons to be optimistic based on history and patterns that I see that are repeating. And two of the things that I realize people don't appreciate – and Tom, you're my metric, so a lot of times you or I or certain people who make a living doing these kind of things, like we'll know a lot about a certain subject to the point where we'll think it's common knowledge. And then if I run something by you, and you don't know about it, I'm like, okay, if Tom doesn't know about this, no one knows about this.

WOODS: [laughing] Thank you.

MALICE: Because this is my rabbit hole, right? And I'm like, okay, I'm going to write – there's two things people don't appreciate: how bad it was. Meaning, one of the things I love is this Boomercon idea, that back in the day, things were great, and now they've kind of fallen away and become corrupted. This is their fairy tale and they always stick to it. As opposed to the leftist idea that things are getting better all the time. Both have some basis reality, but are just applied indiscriminately. So they don't understand how bad things were. But they also don't understand how glorious the victory was at a later point. So those are the two kind of big elements of the book.

But there's so much information, that it's just glacial. I just am very big on putting in as much content as possible. So let me give you one example. I'm talking about Thatcher and Reagan. And at a certain point, they're becoming friends, and President Reagan calls her Maggie, and her people flipped out at him and like, *do not call her Maggie*. And she had some comment about like, "You can call me Marge or Hilda, which is her middle name, but Maggie never." So that's half an hour for me trying to track down, which I still haven't found as we're speaking, where I got this from. And I'm positive, you know what I mean? So that's the kind of thing, where it's like it's like going to be two sentences, but it's going to take me an hour to find it.

WOODS: Yeah, and the thing is – two things about that. One, the audience won't know that that was a big pain in the neck and difficult to find, because this is just a brief reference. But on the other hand, since that's the kind of that gives texture to the text, you have to have it. That's why Paul Johnson's such a great writer, is that every page is filled with little vignettes like that that I'd never heard before.

MALICE: Yeah, there's this one – and I'm glad I found this one. There was this one moment early on when she went to the Oval Office and had a meeting with him about like apartheid, and she leaves and turns to her aide and bangs her fist on her head, like jokingly, and she goes, "There's no one there," referring to Reagan. And it's these little kind of things where it's just like –

And there's another great moment when Reagan and Gorbachev are having their meeting, their fabled meeting in Reykjavik, where they're discussing disarming the world of nuclear weapons, and Thatcher, very similarly to Churchill being powerless in many ways during World War II, is aghast. And she's like, you can't uninvent a weapon. What are you talking about? Like, even if you destroy them, the information is there, the technology's there. And she blurts out, she goes, *How do you know Gorbachev's not going to cheat?* She goes, *I would cheat*.

So little moments, that's what I want, is to have as many of these tiny little anecdotes, because when I read a history book – and David Poitras has been a frequent guest on *Your Welcome* and he does this superbly. All these little comments that make these people feel

like human beings, especially when they've been so mythologized, I think makes it exciting. And then you almost don't realize that they're going to win, because you're a kind of – you know what I mean?

WOODS: Right.

MALICE: It becomes so human, it's just like, *ooh, what's going to happen?* even though you know what happens.

WOODS: Well, like little stories, like Warren Harding would sometimes answer the front door of the White House, that is such an interesting little peek into that era, because that is like a completely different civilization for that to be possible. There's no way Biden or Trump or any of – right? That's impossible. Or Calvin Coolidge, we all know Silent Cal and all that, but he would sometimes – well, at least once for his amusement, he had a bell on his desk, and he would ring it so that somebody would come in to see what he wanted. He would hide under the desk, so they'd be confused when they get in there. So you wouldn't think that he had this frivolous, playful side.

MALICE: Oh, okay, so there's another Calvin Coolidge story, which is basically at the time, the king was treated much more like royalty than he is now. And they weren't allowed to like get up until he got up, and he passed out or something at a dinner. And then he's like, he wakes up, and he goes, *You can't leave until I leave.* And it's just amazing. It was so crazy, yeah.

WOODS: I love it. I love it. Well, let me say something about the mechanics of writing a book, because it sounds actually like you and I do it very similarly. For one thing, I find the introductory and concluding parts of each chapter to be the most difficult, because the introductory is what I do to grab people in.

MALICE: Oh, I disagree. That's my easiest part.

WOODS: Oh, no, for me, that's much – because the thing is, when I look at that blank paper, a blank screen, I know kind of the guts of what I want to say, so I don't let the fact that I can't come up with a clever intro at the moment stop me from starting to write. I just leave some brackets there, and I start to write. So my method is to write what I know now and to write what I know for a fact I want to put in there. And then when I get to a part where I say, okay, I have to research this, I put some brackets or whatever, and then I just keep going so that I can sit there, just pour a lot onto the page and not be held up by things I don't yet know or things I need to look up. And so then I go back, I print everything out, and I see, well, what are the blanks that I need to fill in? And then as I fill in the blanks on each page, I put a checkmark on the page, and I throw it on the floor. And then triumphantly, when I'm all done, they all have checkmarks on them, I pick them up and tear them to pieces and throw them away and the chapter is finished.

MALICE: Huh. Maybe this is why I succeed at Twitter, is I'll know that little one-sentence hook that will really try to slap people in the face.

WOODS: I was just thinking, it's the difference in the way our minds work and the difference in our talents, I think, because that thing that's so hard for me is what comes so easily for you.

MALICE: Yeah, that's interesting. That is very, very different. Like I know exactly that little moment where it's just really fun. The nuts and bolts aren't going to be easy for either of us; it's the content is a lot, a lot of work.

WOODS: By the way, this one little topic about how you start a chapter, I want to say something else about it, because there's like the fifth-grade book-report way of starting a chapter. So let's say the chapter is about something like no-knock raids or something. You could start the chapter by saying, "No-knock raids have been a controversial feature of police activity" – you could start, just absolute plain Jane, just like that. But it's probably better to start with some sentence that shocks you, because it's describing an actual no-knock raid that happened to somebody. It's a very abrupt beginning. And then after you get that story out, then you give the statistics and so on and on. And now that I'm older and I haven't been writing as many books, now I suddenly realized that is the way a good author really would start that chapter.

MALICE: Yeah, and I also very much try to screw with the audience's perceptions and preconceptions. Like a good example of this is Margaret Thatcher – this is indisputably true – was an affirmative action hire. Conservatives will fight this tooth and nail, but they sat down Ed Heath, who – I don't remember if he was leader of the opposition or prime minister at the time – basically said, we need a woman. And there were like four. And I think Willie Whitelaw suggested her, I think it was. And he goes, if we get her in here, we're never going to get rid of her. But fine, I guess. And then she ended up ousting him as leader of the Conservatives not that long after.

So I also, writing about Reagan and Thatcher, which I'm enjoying doing – you know what I like, is like when they were doing such a job making fun of Sarah Palin in like 2008 – we're dating ourselves now – I was always impressed when someone was able to do it in a creative, original way. Because she was so mined, that it's like, if you can do a new twist on this, that's real creativity. So same thing with historical perspectives. If you can do a new twist on like figures that really are in the historical consciousness, I think that's something.

So what I'm doing, no one's realized this, but Thatcher and Reagan were a buddy comedy, right? You had this Hollywood hunk, the symbol of old Hollywood: glamour, governor of California, the wife is impeccably dressed. And then you had this dork who worked at a grocer, who had no sense of humor, who would just be a nag to everyone at the drop of a hat. Like this is the beginning of some movie, where it's like, how are these two figures going to get along? The idea in retrospect that it was natural that they would be joined at the hip is completely not true.

WOODS: Let's go back a little bit. Let's back up to the most fundamental topic. How do you decide what to write a book about?

MALICE: Oh, I've got a document with like 50 book ideas.

WOODS: Ah, okay.

MALICE: I've got like my next four planned out.

WOODS: Well, what makes you think this is a good idea and this one isn't, or how do you know this is something I'd like to do? What kinds of things do you enjoy doing? Because I wouldn't start a project that I didn't think I was going to enjoy.

MALICE: Correct. This is the one where I have gotten the most positive feedback. It's the kind of thing where if you have a certain belief or set of beliefs, and it is to the point where it's obvious to you and no one else seems to have this belief – in this case, being hopeful to this extent that I am – and if you're kind of baffled at their inability, that's telling me, okay, there is a place in the market for this.

And here's another example. A lot of this is about hope. The book's about hope. I was on Glenn Beck. I've been on several shows, and I was berating conservatives, as I often do, correctly, which is we hear about Jim Crow, we hear about the Civil War, World War II. And how many lives were lost as a result of World War II, American casualties? And then these other, the Civil War? And the leaders, of course, are regarded as these great figures, and historically they could not be more great in the sense of being profound and world shattering. But when you look at the Cold War, no one died. It was won without a shot. Like, isn't that better when we win a war and no one dies? And I said, you can't expect the left to tell this story, because they will do everything in their power to bury it. How come conservatives aren't talking about this every five minutes? And then I sat down and I'm like, well, instead of complaining about it, Malice – that's how I refer to myself – why don't you do it? And it's like, oh, yeah, okay. So I'm doing it.

WOODS: All right, this is great. I want to answer my own question, because I'm thinking about how did I decide to do – It's a bunch of different things. Sometimes, like with *Politically Incorrect Guide to American History*, they came to me. They gave me the title and said, *How would you like to write a book called this?* Yeah, okay. I will. So that was a little bit different from the usual. Then my book *33 Questions About American History*, that started off with all the material they refused to publish in the *Politically Incorrect Guide* –

MALICE: Oh, wow, okay.

WOODS: Because they told me it was an 80,000-word limit. I thought, well, they're not going to mind if I hand them 100,000. They're not going to mind. They did mind, and they surgically removed 20,000 words.

MALICE: Wow.

WOODS: But it's not like these were like the worst 20,000 so I was slumming with them. No, no, it was because I really liked this material. So that gave me, let's say, 25% of my next book already. So I felt like, well, how could I not finish this project? But in general, it's the kind of thing where they've been topics like *Meltdown*, the financial crisis, and it was kind of like, if I don't do it, it's not going to get done.

MALICE: Right.

WOODS: Because if an Austrian perspective is not put out – I mean, there might be some generic free market perspective, but to be really persuasive, it has to have the Austrian monetary stuff in it.

MALICE: Right.

WOODS: And I remember, I *literally* got on the telephone with Ron Paul and said, *You have got to write a book about this, because everything you've been saying is coming true. You have the credibility. You have the name recognition. The Austrian tradition needs you right now.*

MALICE: And he said, *How'd you get my number?*

WOODS: [laughing] Yeah, he said, *Who is this?*

MALICE: [laughing] *Tom Woods? That doesn't sound like a name I know.*

WOODS: Yeah, *The goons will be arriving shortly.*

MALICE: [laughing] *Release the hounds.*

WOODS: But his view was, well, I've already said everything I have to say about. I have speeches and whatever. And I said, *Yeah, that's what makes it easy. You take those, you put them together. Like, I'll do it for you.* But he just didn't want to. So sometimes it's that. It's I just feel compelled to do it. Like I can't live with myself if I don't do it.

MALICE: Yeah, that's exactly my approach here. And I also feel like it's — it's also in many ways how I think a lot of young people that you and I talk to, they're looking for that inspiration and that sense of exuberance. And if I'm the one being able to give them, that's just absolutely terrific, so that's kind of a big motivation in shaping this next book as well, which is — let me tell you the word count that we're up to. That's a good question.

WOODS: Yeah.

MALICE: Tom, it's been glacial. Glacial. We are at 32,000 words, so it's almost half done.

WOODS: Oh, good. Okay, good. And I'm so glad to hear you say with 30,000 words that it's almost half done. Because I have friends who are good, decent people, and they say, *Oh, chapter one turned into 25,000 words.*

MALICE: No.

WOODS: You're going to have a book that no one's going to read.

MALICE: You're doing something wrong. Each chapter, if it has an organic cadence to it — that's not the right word, but you know what I mean? — they're going to be similar in length. That 25-page chapter should be two chapters, probably, or you should gut it. You're doing something wrong.

WOODS: For some people, they hear 32,000 words and they think, oh, my gosh, that sounds impossibly long, because most people have never written anything that long. Even in school, have never come close to that. And one way you can at least approach maybe your first book or first self-published book, if it just seems overwhelming, is if there's a field you want to

write about and you blog about it regularly in bite-sized chunks, you can in effect be writing a book a little bit each day in the form of these posts. And for some reason, that seems more manageable than just having a blank canvas and saying, *Okay, you need 80,000 words. Go. Write 500 a day.* And you can even write them so that they kind of flow into each other, but make them into blog posts. And for some reason, it seems finite. It seems approachable. So there are ways of doing.

I've actually published a book of my essays, essays that were all over the internet. You could find them if you wanted to spend all day looking for them, but who would? Especially since they're my essays, who'd be looking around for them? But I really thought they were darn good, and they should be in a collection. And what was easy about it is they were already written. All I've got to do is collect them, format them, publish them. And my traditional publisher wasn't interested in that book, because books of essays don't really sell. But when you sell them through self-publishing, and you get, what, five times the royalty, ten times, whatever –

MALICE: Yeah.

WOODS: It's a lot. You know, I probably pulled in \$70,000 to \$80,000 from that book. And it was just – not instantly, but over a couple of years. It was just stuff I had done already. So sometimes you don't realize what you're building up over the course of just consistently pumping out material day after day.

MALICE: Another big part of my motivation with this one is there hasn't been a "once more unto the breach" type of book since like *Atlas Shrugged*. And so I feel like that kind of thing, where people are excited and motivated and have that, what Rand talked about, emotional fuel is certainly something that would be of enormous social utility. So that is also a big motivator where I'm going with this. Like, this is your legacy. Don't throw it in the trash.

WOODS: Wow. Now, are you going to publish this yourself, or what are your plans?

MALICE: Oh, absolutely. So I did *Dear Reader* through Kickstarter. I did *The New Right* through the Cathedral, and the experiences were quite different. And let me assure you, I am absolutely not going to be missing working with a mainstream publisher. At the very least, that's two years of my life. That's two more books that I could do.

WOODS: Yeah, yeah, exactly. I asked that simply because it means you have to do a self-imposed deadline.

MALICE: No.

WOODS: Oh, okay. Well, I mean, in other words, there's nobody breathing down your neck saying you have to have this done by June.

MALICE: Correct. But there's no deadline. The thing is, here's the thing, if I haven't done – let's suppose I have a deal with, whatever, Penguin. And they say it has to be done by June, June 2021. It'll be in bookstores June 2022 at the earliest, right?

WOODS: Yeah, right.

MALICE: If I'm dawdling and I'm done by September 1st, I could get it out December 1st.

WOODS: Yeah, I know. I know. It's amazing.

MALICE: The self-imposed deadline, I could be even lazier, and I'm still saving like nine months? That's a baby —

WOODS: Yeah. That is crazy.

MALICE: — if the books I read as a kid about where babies come from are accurate.

WOODS: Well, there's one thing that's definitely noteworthy about Regnery publishing, which I've published with several times, is that if they think your book is extremely timely and hot — and your book is kind of evergreen, so this wouldn't really work. And not all my books would work for this too, but when I was doing *Meltdown*, they said we'll turn this thing around semi-instantly. I got it to them in October. And if it hadn't been for — see, at Christmastime, publishing shuts down for two weeks, so that's going to throw anything out of whack. If it hadn't been for that, it would have been January. They had it out the first week of February.

MALICE: I've got to interrupt you. I'm sorry. Like, that is so maddening. It's like, what do you mean? Like, do the word processing documents stop working on like December 20th? What do you talking about? It's publishing. It makes me so angry that they feel comfortable, like, eh, it's a certain time of the year, so I guess I can't read.

WOODS: [laughing]

MALICE: But seriously, right?

WOODS: No, I hear you, I hear you.

MALICE: The complete lackadaisical lack of work ethic, and the just, that's perfectly appropriate in their culture to be like, *Oh, well, it's the end of the year. What do you want me to do, turn around a document that I've had on my desk for six months? That's crazy. It's December 20th. It's the two weeks where everyone goes blind and can't process data.*

WOODS: [laughing] Let me ask you about just, I do as an author myself get questions from people from time to time about how they can write a book or like what the first steps are or what do they even do. They have an idea, but they don't know the ins and outs of the mechanics of it. Now, a lot of these people are asking me about fiction writing. I don't know anything about that, and I think that's entirely different. I think it's way more competitive. I think it's much, much more difficult to get started in that, so I can't really advise them in that.

MALICE: Correct.

WOODS: But suppose somebody asks this of you. How would you answer?

MALICE: I have been asked this. I tell them, the problem is a lot of people see like a movie, and they think that has any correlation to reality. Or they'll be like, oh, I heard this one story

of this woman who wrote a novel about her dog. Like, why can't that be me? It's like, the reason it's newsworthy is because it's so rare. If everyone who got a lottery ticket won the lottery, you wouldn't be hearing the news about the Powerball winner. So fiction is excruciatingly hard to get into.

Nonfiction is hard as well. People are like, oh, I think people would like this story about this guy and this girl who go to the Himalayas? I'll tell them, okay, when's the last time you bought a book like that?

WOODS: Yeah.

MALICE: So if you're not even buying this, then who's buying it? So fiction is fun to write, but my advice would be it's tough enough already. You're really setting yourself up for – because a lot of these novelists that get somewhere have cred within the publishing or literary world through writing short stories for like the *New Yorker*, or there's certain outlets where their name becomes recognized, right? If you're just some random person, in terms of getting picked up, it's almost impossible.

WOODS: Oh, absolutely. And sometimes people think, well, don't worry, I'll self-publish it and then I'll get some publicity by, let's say, going on some podcasts or whatever. But the thing is, I generally, with rare exceptions – I get a lot of novelists who want to come on my show and talk about a novel. But talking about a novel is boring, because we're not going to give away how it turns out, so the conversation is generally not good. And plus, I don't want to read your novel. I'll just be blunt about it. If I interview a nonfiction author, I'm at least learning something that maybe I'll use in a talk or I'll use somewhere and it'd just be good knowledge to have. I'm not generally learning anything from a novel, so it's just all time that I'll never get back in my life, because chances are, you're not a great literary star, so I'm not getting a tremendous amount of reading pleasure out of it from just an average person's novel. I don't want to read it. So you're not coming on my show. That's my attitude. Sorry.

MALICE: And here's some more advice I can give people. And a lot of times when you give people advice that they don't like, they get all offended.

WOODS: Oh, yeah.

MALICE: And I'm fine with that, because this is something that is not in dispute. If you go to a restaurant, and don't leave a tip, unless it's really atrocious service, that is extremely rude and wrong, and I don't think people would argue that. And because they're not involved in publishing, when I say the following, they're not going to be able to perceive it in the same context. They're going to insist that, oh, where do you get off? I'm telling you, within this subculture, these are the norms. Just like you don't literally have to tip, there's no law, but if you don't do it, it's extremely offensive. If you are going to ask someone to look over some of your writing, and this person is established or someone whose opinion you respect, and you send to them and you go, *Well, it's only a first draft. It still needs work*, that is as offensive as not tipping a waiter. Because you're saying, well, I value your feedback. I want it, but I'm expecting you to do my work for me. If you want someone's feedback, and you value their time, *value* their time. Demonstrate that you value their time. Make it as easy for them to help you as possible.

WOODS: Okay, I'm going to take this a step farther here, because I think I would only review a manuscript for somebody you, or if Dave wrote a book –

MALICE: I agree. I wouldn't. But what I'm saying is I've had people – I'm sorry to interrupt you. I've had people be like, *Oh, can you look this over? By the way, it's not in good shape yet.*

WOODS: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah, definitely. You've got to be kidding me. At least present me – you know, have Mexico send its best when you're going to send me your thing, right?

MALICE: [laughing] They're not sending you, Tom. They're not sending you.

WOODS: But the thing is, I get unsolicited – yeah, you know, *Would you like to read this over?* My gosh, do you realize how much time that takes? And it's not selfish on my part at all to say, But I don't want to take 20 hours to read your manuscript and comment on it. I don't know who you are. I would not invite a plumber to my house and say, "I need you to do 20 unremunerated hours' worth of work, and if you don't, you're a selfish bastard."

MALICE: Yeah, and people get offended by this, because then it's like, oh, who do you think you are? It's like, well, if I'm a nobody, which is your prerogative to think, why are you asking for my feedback?

WOODS: Yeah. Yeah, that's right. That's right. Now in terms of writing, I would say, first of all, there are good reasons to both self-publish and to use a traditional publisher. Sometimes circumstances call for one or the other. I could imagine a case where if the circumstances were right, I would go back to a traditional publisher, but they're very narrow conditions. But I can give advice either way.

On self-publishing, there are people who really get this. They really, really do a good job in building up buzz about their book. They have a landing page about it ahead of time. Maybe they have a giveaway associated, where you buy three copies, forward me the receipt, and I'll send you a bonus. And by the way, you can automate that, so if somebody forwards a receipt, they get the bonus. Most people are not going to write to that email address at all, so you can just program it to automatically send to anybody who writes to it, and 99% of the time, you'll be fine. But there are people who really, they try everything, and to just observe – it's like how I built my supporting listeners website. I looked at other people's Patreon offerings – or not Patreon, because I don't think that existed at the time, but something like that. I looked at other people's supporter benefits. And I thought, well, gee, could I offer that same kind of thing? I mean, don't copy what somebody is doing, but model yourself after what a successful person does. And then you'll maybe you'll see results.

Now, in terms of big publishers, most of them won't communicate directly with you. They'll want a literary agent submitting a chapter or a proposal on your behalf. And so that becomes a matter of going online and finding one. And it's not impossible to find one. In my case, one came to me. I had a big, big hit on my hands, and an agent said, *Listen, I'm sure you already have representation, but just on the off chance you don't, let me offer you my services.* And I said, *Of course I don't. I'm some kid. I don't know anything about this.*

MALICE: [laughing] *Why would anybody want to represent me? I'm a mess.*

WOODS: Right, exactly. It was a project that was given to me, so I just did it. And so having him meant that he could do things that an author really couldn't do. So my follow-up book, because I had a big hit in my hands, we had a bidding war between Random House and Penguin, which now is Penguin Random House, but at the time they were competitors, which is great for me because they were competing over the rights to my manuscript. And I'll say — I'm going to I'm going to reveal the dollar figure. Do you think that's a mistake?

MALICE: Yeah.

WOODS: Is that a mistake? Okay. I won't. I'll just say it was a lot [laughing]. Because the price of that —

MALICE: Wait, email it to me to drive the audience crazy.

WOODS: Okay, I'll email you —

MALICE: And then later I'll tell you why I think it's a mistake.

WOODS: Okay, the advance on it —

MALICE: I'll tell you right now. I'll tell you why it's a mistake. Because the economics of publishing right now — when was this?

WOODS: Oh, yeah. Oh, now, you would never get an advance like this. Back in like 2006.

MALICE: Yeah, it's night and day. So you're giving them unrealistic numbers to deal with, and it's absolutely the wrong approach.

WOODS: Yeah, yeah. I mean, generally, I don't tell people how much I make, because that's just creepy. But in this, you're right, especially because, first of all, publishing took kind of a hit during the financial crisis. Everything took a hit. And it recovered, but with digital books and so much competition for reading material now, it is a hard industry to be in. And they're not giving out advances of the sort that I once got. But the point is, I would never have gotten this, because who am I? Am I going to get on the phone with Penguin and say, "Well, Random House just offered so-and-so. What's your" — but my agent was able to go back and forth, back and forth, and then just update me, *Well, we're up to this. We're up to that*, thinking, how is this my life?

MALICE: Yeah.

WOODS: But the point is, the agent can do things that you can't do.

MALICE: Yes. No publisher will talk to you without an agent. I mean, that's their gatekeeper role. And how do you get an agent? It's always going to be a fluke. It's like, how do you get a wife? You know what I mean? Like, there's no set pattern in doing this.

WOODS: Yeah. And incidentally, the agent will get some percentage of your royalties, but it's worth every penny. And it's worth it to the publisher, because as you say, it's a gatekeeper role in the sense of, without the agent — I mean, think of what is the role of the agent. Some

people think of it as like a do-nothing middleman or something like that. First of all, middlemen are not do-nothing, or they wouldn't exist. And in this case, they serve the purpose of trying to filter out all the cranks who would be sending book manuscripts to these places.

MALICE: Exactly.

WOODS: They know that, well, so-and-so has vetted this person, so this person is worth looking at. That's a very important service.

MALICE: Oh, absolutely. But I mean, now that I've kind of completely turned my back on traditional publishing, it's a very different situation.

WOODS: Yeah. See, I almost wrote a book this year. In fact, I texted you about it, saying, I think I want to write a book. And I don't know if I ever followed up with you on it. And I decided not to do it. But because I had so much material on lockdowns and the virus —

MALICE: Wait, so you're saying the lockdown book was very failed?

WOODS: Very failed book project, indeed, indeed. And I thought, look, I already have so much raw material. It's just like the Ron Paul situation. You've already done the work. Just massage it into a book. And for a variety of reasons, I decided I didn't want to do it.

MALICE: I think that's a mistake. I think it's a huge mistake.

WOODS: Yeah, well, you and I should talk about it.

MALICE: I'm kind of shocked, to be honest, because —

WOODS: But the thing is, a couple weeks later somebody came out with the exact book I would have written, Jay Richards. Came out with the exact book.

MALICE: No, doesn't matter.

WOODS: Yeah, I thought about it. I forget; there were pros and cons, and the thing is, to write a book about that, I mean, I know a lot about the situation at this point, but I haven't read all the peer-reviewed papers about X, Y, and Z. It just seemed exhausting.

MALICE: All you would need to do is take the transcripts of your talks.

WOODS: Yeah, but the thing is, for that, it's not even like I want to make money selling the book. I just want to get people on my mailing list.

MALICE: Okay.

WOODS: So I've already got a free eBook on it.

MALICE: Okay, why not – okay, I think this is this is not only money on the table; you're also losing an opportunity to galvanize a lot of people against the biggest kind of assault on our freedoms in our lifetime.

WOODS: Yeah, I know. I know. It's just that, unlike *Meltdown*, where there really weren't – I mean Thomas Sowell eventually wrote a book, but it was late and it wasn't an explicitly Austrian book on the housing problem. This, it looked like there were a number of titles already on the horizon, and I just didn't relish trying to compete with them.

MALICE: Why?

WOODS: Maybe that sounds like a loser thing to say, but I just didn't have the energy to do it.

MALICE: It's like someone's in the loser brigade.

WOODS: [laughing]

MALICE: *I don't want to compete. I want to be the only one.* Wow, okay.

WOODS: Yeah, yes, I want to be a monopoly.

MALICE: This is why you're not verified on Twitter. Because there's other Tom Woods, and it's like, one's as good as the other. Why be the real Tom Woods that matters?

WOODS: It's a good thing I didn't talk to you. You might have talked me into doing this, and I still think –

MALICE: I'm disappointed. I'm not joking.

WOODS: But you can already see what the response was going to be. *Well, you know, he's just a historian.* And then also, *Oh, and he's a white supremacist.* You know all the b***s*** things they would have said.

MALICE: So you're never going to write a book again, because you're a white supremacist, allegedly? But that's what you're saying. This is nonsensical.

WOODS: It's just a question of like, do I – this would have been high-profile, and like, ugh, do I have the energy to endure this again?

MALICE: It doesn't have to be high-profile. You can be Howard Hughes.

WOODS: Yeah, I suppose. I suppose.

MALICE: How can you be forced to be high-profile? Don't do interviews for it.

WOODS: But if I'm going to go to the length of doing it, then I want to sell as many as possible.

MALICE: You don't have to do that.

WOODS: Look, people listening. If you're listening at this point and you haven't turned it off, let me tell you something: he's not going to talk me into it, so don't think, well, I'll expect this thing in a few months. No, no, I just —

MALICE: Fine. Just like Ron Paul and you, you give me the material, and I'll do it.

WOODS: [laughing] Yeah, I had a friend who actually was considering that. He said, look, hand it to me, and I'll do something with it. And then he kind of flaked on me.

MALICE: Okay. Bob Murphy, huh?

WOODS: [laughing] Failed economist. Very failed. Extremely failed.

MALICE: Yeah, very failed.

WOODS: All right, any parting words before we wrap up, other than I should stop being a lazy bum?

MALICE: I don't think it's lazy. It sounds defeatist.

WOODS: It's more like, my life works now. Everything I want, it works.

MALICE: There's a lot of people who are suffering, and you're in a position — and I know the answer —

WOODS: But I'm already doing stuff. I mean, I write about it every day. This is just one other way I could do it.

MALICE: You are trying to yell over me, because you're yelling over the voice in the back of your head.

WOODS: [laughing]

MALICE: I'm not joking at all.

WOODS: No, I know, but that is so true. That's so true.

MALICE: And that voice is telling you, *Woods* — I know that's how you refer to yourself.

WOODS: Yes, it does. It calls me that.

MALICE: Your voice is telling you, it's like, *Woods, you are seeing some very nefarious, sinister stuff, and you are in a position to do something about it, and you've done most of the work already.* And it's kind of sad if you don't follow it through.

WOODS: Do you realize what you've now done, is that because I don't edit stuff out of my episodes —

MALICE: What about all the racial slurs we were just saying? You're leaving those in?

WOODS: [laughing] Would you shut up? Anyway, you know the comments section now. Now we're going to have to deal with, *Oh, Woods, you have to do it.*

MALICE: You deserve all the approbation that you get. And I am not kidding.

WOODS: All right, look, next time I'm in New York, like in 2037 –

MALICE: I'm not taking your call, loser.

WOODS: Not only are you taking me my call, for once in your life, you're buying me dinner after this.

MALICE: Yeah, okay, we'll go to Wendy's, where you'll recognize everything on the menu.

WOODS: [laughing] All right, not everybody knows that reference, probably just you and me on this thing. So the last thing we'll say before we go. I used to go to New York a lot to see Michael, and then I got tired of him. But one of these times I went, and we were going to have lunch, and he wants to know what kind of place we're going to go to. I said, it's got to be a place where I recognize everything on the menu. Because I wasn't very adventurous in a food sort of way. And he just loved this and reproduced the text message of me saying that. He just loved that response, because it's so ridiculous on multiple levels.

MALICE: Yeah, it's like, okay, there's one thing I don't recognize. Well, I have to order it by law.

WOODS: [laughing] Right.

MALICE: Or it's like, I don't recognize it; therefore it must be literally like being shot in the face [laughing].

WOODS: Did you actually wind up taking us to a – did we wind up going to like some regular diner or something?

MALICE: We went to like a bougie place that was called Delicatessen or Diner.

WOODS: Okay, okay.

MALICE: Where it's like high-end take on a diner.

WOODS: Yeah, right, so everything was recognizable.

MALICE: Yeah. *Aioli? What the heck is this? Bring me some mayo, like a civilized person. Catsup? What country am I in?*

WOODS: All right, look, people –

MALICE: *Mr. Pibb? You must be some kind of crazy person. I only drink sodas with MDs.*

WOODS: Do you realize, after all this, I'm still trying to promote you, you SOB? What avenues —

MALICE: What use are you? You're a defeatist loser.

WOODS: All right, I'm just going to tell them. Follow Michael on Twitter, @MichaelMalice.

MALICE: If I haven't blocked you already.

WOODS: If he hasn't blocked you already. And I mean, obviously you'll see his tweets in your Twitter feed, but you can also just do what a lot of people do, which is at the end of the day, just go to Michael's Twitter and just read through what he's been up to all day, and you'll be amused.

MALICE: Did you see what happened this weekend?

WOODS: No, I did not. Well, maybe. What do you have in mind?

MALICE: One of my tweets went viral.

WOODS: Oh, what was that?

MALICE: I said if you replace the word *Jews* with *coronavirus*, the behavior of the 1930s German —

WOODS: Oh, I did see that .

MALICE: — really similar. And everyone's been losing their minds. Antifa came at me, calling me a Nazi, and then people jumped in, *He actually went to yeshiva*. And I had to tell them to delete or get blocked. If someone is attacking me and they're making a fool of themselves, why are you interceding and giving them helpful biographical information?

WOODS: Yeah, right. Right.

MALICE: You're not making it better for me. You're making it more effective for them to attack me, you idiot.

WOODS: Yeah. Yeah, I did see that.

MALICE: And I got on to a Twitter account that I love, which is called Cursive Boomer Images. So they called me a boomer. I was very excited.

WOODS: Oh, that is good.

MALICE: Because I follow that account.

WOODS: All right, well, that's what you're going to do. And we have a show notes page, TomWoods.com/1793, we'll have Michael's books and anything I can think of. And also I'll have

a link to my previous episode that I did by myself, called something like "How to Become a Better Writer," something like that.

MALICE: Apparently it's: don't write. Don't do anything —

WOODS: All right, cut his mic. Can we cut his mic? I'm talking. There's no one here. I do all these things. I could just mute your mic, but instead, we'll just say, Michael, thanks for being here today. I appreciate it.

MALICE: You are welcome.