

## Not Your Mother's Library Transcript

### Episode 41: Sweet & Scary

(Brief intro music)

Rachel: Hello, and welcome to Not Your Mother's Library, a readers' advisory podcast from the Oak Creek Public Library. I'm Rachel.

Mary: And I'm Mary.

Rachel: We're back after winter break, baby! Did you have a nice holiday, Mary?

Mary: I had a great holiday with family! We don't get to see each other very often so that was nice. I'm excited to get back into the swing of things though. I've really missed our silly little podcast. Hopefully we have some winners for you all today!

Rachel: My winter break was really laid back, which is just how I like it. Dunno [sic] about all of you, listeners, but I feel rejuvenated for the new year. Let's kick everything off with this episode just in time for February. Here on Not Your mother's Library, we usually recommend romantic reads to get everyone in the mood for Valentine's Day...but we also realize that romance isn't everyone's cup of tea. We do still have some mushy-gushy, lovey-dovey, sexy-wexy [sic] books on today's list, but I figured we could mix things up by throwing in a handful dark stories about obsession, stalking, and deception! Doesn't that just warm the cockles of your heart? No? Okay. Well, Mary, maybe you should ease us into things with some good, old-fashioned romance.

Mary: I'm going to kick us off with some epic Highland love by suggesting the book "The Highlander Takes a Bride." This title is part of the "Highland Brides" series by Lynsay Sands which is set in 14th-century Scotland. You do not have to read these books in order; I certainly didn't. Each story can stand on its own, but it is fun when a character is mentioned in the later books to already know them.

Rachel: Mmhm.

Mary: I picked "The Highlander Takes a Bride" as my recommendation because Saidh is such a strong, fun character who starts off the story in the wrong place at the wrong time—happening upon her cousin in the woods as she (dramatic voice) kills her husband.

Rachel: Whoa.

Mary: Who may have deserved it. This really sets the reader up the rest of the narrative. Years later, as she tries to prove that her cousin did not kill her newest husband—husband number three—she happens to get caught up in her own love story and murder plot. Many times, it is up to the man to save the damsel in distress, but Saidh does not sit back and let that happen. The new laird has caught her eye and quickly finds that he would do anything to protect Saidh despite the fact that the whole castle believes her cousin is a murderer and all seven of her brothers think she is being forced into a marriage after what they assume to be an assault. Lynsay Sands does a great job of making the reader feel safe and assured that everything will work out...and at the edge of their seat at the same time. “The Highlander Takes a Bride” shows that the damsel doesn’t need a man to fix all of her problems but partnerships help a great deal. I will say that this book and this series are a little ‘on the nose’ with the tropes and character development, but I wholeheartedly enjoyed this entire series because you know what you’re getting. If you’re looking for a cozy love story where there is sweet romance, swordplay, suspense, plot twists, humor, and action, this is the book for you.

Rachel: I’m coming in to ruin the romance with a psychological suspense thriller that turns deadly. “You” by Caroline Kepnes is about a mild-mannered guy—Joe—who meets an aspiring writer—Beck—at the bookstore where he works. Is this a meet cute? Definitely not. Joe becomes obsessed with the idea of Beck being ‘the one for him’. So what does he do about it? Stalking!

Mary: Yeah!

Rachel: Joe infiltrates her social media, hacks into her email, and starts monitoring her text messages after gaining access to her phone. But wait, there’s more! Joe is also a peeping tom and a collector of creepiness—hair, clippings, that kind of thing. That behavior is psychotic enough, but after a series of odd events—some of which are orchestrated by you-know-who himself—Beck actually ends up dating Joe, not recognizing him for the predator he truly is. Determined to remove all obstacles along their path of ‘true love’, Joe trains his laser focus on Beck’s cheating ex-boyfriend, a too-close best friend, and a scheming therapist. It’s clear from the start that the relationship between these two is doomed given Joe’s delusional fixation and disturbing behavior, but the story is a roller coaster from start to finish. You’ll have to read until the very end to see how far things fly off the rails. What I like about this book is that Joe isn’t the only messed up character. Everyone in Beck’s circle of friends is duplicitous, her family members are controlling, and she herself is selfish and flakey. Because this is a second-person narrative, though, we as the reader see how Joe twists Beck’s failings to fit his own perfect vision of her. She isn’t a pot-stirrer; oh no, she is just an artist searching for inspiration. She isn’t avoiding work, she just has too

many distractions that, coincidentally, Joe is more than willing to take care of on her behalf. Beck's human flaws are absolutely no excuse for Joe to start taking over her life, of course; this dude is manipulative, insane, and scary. But it sure does beat reading about an innocent Mary Sue who can't help but fall into the villain's clutches. "You" is the first book in a series which has also been adapted into a popular TV show. I enjoyed the first season a lot, though my interest waned during season two when the characters were put into less believable situations. Much like the book, the show is narrated by Joe, a decision which I applaud given how it escalates the creep factor a hundred-fold. Hearing him try to justify his actions is a trip. If you are interested in a readalike, I suggest "Normal" by Graeme Cameron. The one-line description is, "A man who keeps women locked in a secret basement decides to clean up his act after he falls for the checkout girl at a grocery store." What could go wrong?

Mary: I'm recommending a title that has every type of love imaginable with "Meet Me in Another Life" by Catriona Silvey. Thora and Santi meet in what feels like an almost magical, fantastic coincidence. Their budding relationship is cut horrifically short when tragedy takes place. Somehow, they meet again and again and again. They experience almost every form of love there is: true love, building a family together, an office crush with a power dynamic, the love of a good friend, the love of a parent to a child...maybe they have more in common than they thought. Why do they keep meeting in all these different versions of their lives? They have to find out why they are drawn to each other and how they can escape this seemingly endless cycle of happiness and tragedy. When they discover what's really going on, they may still run out of time. This is a book that will get you thinking about what is important in a relationship; how much can you give to your partner? What you should keep for yourself and what is too much to ask of another person? Santi is convinced there's a divine plan for his life and everything happens for a reason while Thora finds lack of purpose for the events in her life. The things she wants and hopes for are always just beyond her reach or taken from her when she least expects it. I promise the ending is not what you think. You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll question what you really believe in. It's a book that makes you uncomfortable for a reason. Right after reading, I told Rachel I hated it and then I vented about it for so long.

Rachel: (laughs)

Mary: Now that it's had a chance to sit with me, I think it's one of my favorite books.

Rachel: That's quite the turnaround! But I think the best books are those that make you question things. When throwing around ideas for this episode with Mary, I pitched 'messed up relationships', giving the

example of “Gone Girl” by Gillian Flynn. Turns out that you were planning to watch the movie that very weekend, weren’t’cha?

Mary: Yeah.

Rachel: (laughing) And I...I kinda spoiled the plot for you. Still feel bad about that, even though the book has been out for over ten years! So, I would like to formally apologize for spoilage and will avoid ruining the plot of “Gone Girl” for our listeners in the best way I know how: by regurgitating someone else’s review! Joanne Wilkinson of Booklist writes,

“When Nick Dunne’s beautiful and clever wife, Amy, goes missing on their fifth wedding anniversary, the media descend on the Dunnes’ Missouri McMansion with all the fury of a Dateline episode. And Nick stumbles badly, for, as it turns out, he has plenty to hide, and under the pressure of police questioning and media scrutiny, he tells one lie after another. Juxtaposed with Nick’s first-person narration of events are excerpts from Amy’s diary, which completely contradict Nick’s story and depict a woman who is afraid of her husband, has recently found out she’s pregnant, and had been looking to buy a gun for protection. In addition, Amy is famous as the model for her parents’ long-running and beloved children’s series, *Amazing Amy*. But what looks like a straightforward case of a husband killing his wife to free himself from a bad marriage morphs into something entirely different in Flynn’s hands.”

That is the best review I could find that doesn’t ruin any surprises. Let’s just say that men and women can both become disillusioned, demented maniacs. Equality of the sexes, ya’ll. If you have already read “Gone Girl”—which, let’s be real, you probably have since, again, it was published more than ten years ago...Mary, I am so sorry I spoiled it! But, also, is that my fault? No? M-maybe? Yeah, okay, it was...I recommend Flynn’s other dark and twisted novels. Her first book, “*Sharp Objects*,” centers around an unstable journalist who returns home to cover the disappearance of a young girl and to solve the mystery of her own past. This was quickly followed by “*Dark Places*,” a story about a protagonist who may or may not be misremembering the events surrounding an intense childhood trauma. Flynn’s writing style is fast-paced yet intricate. If you enjoy thrillers, you will undoubtedly like her work. “Gone Girl” was adapted into a movie back in 2014, and Rosamund Pike plays Amy so well it’s almost as though she were born for the role. I looked it up on IMDb just now to find out the year of release, and...turns out the movie was directed by the master of suspense himself, David Fincher. His cinematography is unmistakable. If you are in the mood for more movies with an eerie feel and a dark tone, try Fincher’s “*Se7en*” or “*Panic Room*.”

Mary: I forgive you for spoiling “Gone Girl” but just wait, I’ll get you with a spoiler for something you planned on reading at some point in the near future.

Rachel: Nooo!

Mary: My last pick for today is another steamy romance titled “When You Wish Upon a Rogue” by Anna Bennett. Sophie is the chair of a secret society, The Debutante Underground. This group of women meet each week at a hidden venue to discuss the latest edition of the advice column, The Debutante’s Revenge. The writers of this advice column touch on topics that ladies of the Edwardian time period need to know. Topics like: How do you cope with your feelings for a young man when you will be married to another? What should a new wife expect? When the current venue becomes too cramped and may be discovered, it is up to Sophie to find a new meeting place. She stumbles upon what may be the perfect spot—an abandoned shop. Well, mostly abandoned. The owner, Reese, uses this shop as a getaway to deal with his disappointment and shame. After striking a deal so Sophie can host her meetings here, she finds that Reese makes her feel the sparks that her betrothed does not. What can she do since she is already promised to another man, one who will alleviate her family’s current financial hardship and save her sisters from ruin? Even though she is running out of time before her wedding, she finds that there is more to Reese than just a lonely shop owner. What can she do when her family’s fate and the entire Debutante Underground is counting on her? This book is part of the Debutante Diaries series. The other two books are written from the perspective of Sophie’s best friends and co-authors of the Debutante’s Revenge.

Rachel: Period romance for the win! It’s classic. And I have another kind of classic for you. My final recommendation could also be described as ‘anti-romance’. “The Kind Worth Killing” by Peter Swanson delves into the souring marriage of Ted and Miranda Severson. While on a flight from London to Boston, Ted strikes up a conversation with a woman named Lily Kintner. She is mysterious and gorgeous, of course, and they get to sharing a few in-flight cocktails. Way too tipsy for their own good, Ted and Lily begin to play a game where they reveal truths about one another. Ted brings up the fact that his life with Miranda has turned out to be less than ideal. In fact, Ted suspects his wife has been less than faithful of late. He jokes that he could kill her for cheating on him and, without any hesitation whatsoever, Lily tells him that she could help with that. (smacks lips) Um. Uh-oh! Lily’s philosophy is that some people are worth killing because they bring nothing but grief and heartache to those around them. So, why not? As you can imagine, this gets Ted to sober up. However, it also gets the cogs in his stupid little brain to turn. What if he took up Lily’s offer to help with his ‘problem’? Once they land in Boston,

Ted and Lily's relationship deepens as they begin to scheme. Lily's sordid past catches up with them soon enough, though, and Ted starts to distrust her. Turning against your co-conspirator is a dangerous play, especially when a detective slowly catches up with them and their crimes. My advice? Maybe don't become involved with a random chick you meet on public transportation. Maybe go to marriage counselling or file for divorce if you're relationship with a significant other is no longer working out. And maybe don't try to murder people. Those seem like some pretty simple rules to follow, yeah? "The Kind Worth Killing" is a modern reimagining of the novel "Strangers on a Train" by Patricia Highsmith. You've probably heard of that, at least tangentially, as it was adapted into a popular film of the same name by Alfred Hitchcock during the 1950s. It gave rise to the creative plot device of 'character A meets character B, they make a deal to eliminate Character C—and sometimes Character D—but it all goes horribly awry'. Highsmith's classic work has inspired many modern murder mysteries, including a handful of episodes of "Law & Order." Hey, if it ain't broke...

Mary: (snaps) ...don't fix it! That's all we have time for. Remember to check the show notes for a list of all the books we just talked about. Please subscribe and rate the podcast if you like what you hear. You can reach us through the Oak Creek Public Library website or Facebook page by sending messages to @OakCreekLibrary. We are also on TikTok and Instagram, so go ahead and give us a follow. Until next time, happy reading.

Rachel and Mary: Bye!

(Brief outro music)