



Library podcast

Julia Quinn: 'The Girl with the Make-Believe Husband'

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[00:00:35] It is my pleasure to welcome you to Central Library and to tonight's program with Julia Quinn. I wanted to take a minute to thank all of the people who made tonight's program possible. We are so grateful to our author series sponsors Gary Kunis and the Seattle Times and we're also grateful to The Seattle Public Library Foundation private gifts to the foundation from thousands of donors help the library provide free programs and services that touch the lives of everyone in our community. So if any of you are library donors Library Foundation donors thank you so much for your support. Now it is my pleasure to introduce Julia Quinn. Yeah we're excited tonight. She is here to celebrate the launch of her most recent book The Girl With A make believe husband which is part of the rope speed series which I believe is a prequel to The Bridge Titans. Is that accurate. Yes. Julia is a New York Times best selling writer and is one of only 16 authors ever to be inducted into the Romance Writers of America Hall of Fame. She's the author of 25 novels including her very popular Bridgeton series The Devil Stokes series and I forgot to ask is it the Smith Smith quartet or the Smythe Smith. Quartet. So without further ado please help me welcome Julia Quinn. So I'm not Susan Burton

[00:02:00] Anyway so thank you all so much for coming. Especially because it's so nice outside and we're inside. And that's really hard for Seattleites to do when the weather actually turns turns nice. But I thought I would start out by chatting a little bit with you about a few things that I've learned as a romance writer. People often ask about my career. And the main thing I have realized is that most people who ask about my career and what I do don't actually know what a romance novel is. And people think they know and people really think they know now that 50 Shades of Grey has become really popular. But that's actually not considered a romance novel in terms of in terms of. The way publishing thinks of a romance novel so I'm going to explain that. It used to be way back when that romance novel consisted of a man and a woman. And now were much broader. You have Man Man Woman woman I've seen woman dragon. Hedgehog shape shifters all sorts of things. I'm pretty vanilla with this mine. Couples tend to be hetero. Women they are hetero but you can do basically need two people meeting or re meeting at the beginning of the book

[00:03:20] And it has to have a happy ever after at the end and for romance fiction that happy ever after means you know a commitment a long term commitment to the other person. Since I write historical romance that generally means marriage or you know. The intention of marriage. How you get from the beginning to the end. Is. Completely open and. I think a lot of people tend to think that romance novels follow a formula. I've had people say so. Does your publisher just send you a plot and you do it. No I write my books all by myself. I come up with the whole thing. I really don't get questions like that that often but I try to explain to people when they think of the word formula. And I said you know it's not a formula but there are parameters. And if you think about it with a mystery you need to open with somebody getting killed or a dead body being found right. And you need to end it with the murder being solved. And how you get from the beginning to the end is a wide open canvas just the same as in romance where you have to be will meet a meet and have a happily ever after. And with any type of genre fiction reader expectation really plays into it. And if you think about it imagine if you're reading an Agatha Christie novel at the end you know Miss Marple or Hercule Poirot was just like

[00:04:41] That's a stumper. You know you'd be really upset. And it's the same thing with romance. We need to have that happy ever after if there isn't a happy ever after. No matter how romantic the book was it's not a romance novel. And I do make kind of a joke it's a little bit snide but it's also kind of true that when a man tries to write a romance novel in general the woman dies

[00:05:09] Which is why you know you'll read to me about Nicholas Sparks and he'll say I don't write romance novels and he's right. He doesn't write romance novels because he just you know he keeps killing off these women or like Love Story. You know she dies in the end. That's not a romance novel. So that's what a romance novel is. And then also another key difference is the difference between romance novels and erotica. And that's something that's really come in to play recently people with 50 Shades of Grey and stuff like that. And the way to look at it is that in romance novels the emotion and the emotional journey. Are the most important part. And if there are intimate scenes. You know in a good romance novel they are there to move forward the plot and the characterization whereas in erotica. The main point of the book are the intimate scenes and the emotions arising around that. So oh and then the last thing I was going to say about what a romance novel is is that. The romance

[00:06:07] Needs to be the main part of the story.

[00:06:10] So if you have a book where you know you've got this main female character and she's the heroine and she's falling in love with this guy and at the same time she's dealing with this big you know some sort of family issue dealing with her mom's chemotherapy or something.

[00:06:27] Well which of those two stories is the big part of the book. If it's the romantic part then you probably have a romance novel if it's really her dealing with her family issues and you know abandonment of her you know from her father when you all that something is called women's fiction. So kind of depends on what the main focus of the book is. So that's what a romance novel is. Now. Moving on. And I'm also. Happy to take questions while I'm chatting

[00:06:54] Okay.

[00:06:56] So he asked me is Romeo and Juliet qualifies a romance. No

[00:07:01] I personally don't even find it romantic. But. No it because it's not a happy ending.

[00:07:08] I mean it in all honesty it's a story about two really spoiled teenagers. It's a great story about two really spoiled teenagers but it wouldn't be an end plus when I talk about what a romance novel is. It's in the modern terms for the genre. And you know Shakespeare was writing hundreds and hundreds of years ago so I think it's hard to try to label him in the same way. Yes. So she was asking if I ever get frustrated by the way books are often shelved in bookstores. I think if I'm getting this right that you find that a lot of books that you wouldn't consider to be romance novels get shelved in the romance section. Maybe because. That they don't usually follow my parameters. Yeah I mean I think the person to be probably the most frustrated would be the author of those books because her books probably aren't quite the right spot. It's tricky. She's me and a number of authors who started out writing romance and aren't really writing romance anymore. I mean a lot of for example what nor Roberts does now would not be strictly considered romance novels but because she's written Oh I don't know eight thousand other romance novels you know people know to look for her there.

[00:08:17] So it is it's a little bit tricky and I think bookstores are always trying to figure out the best way to do this. I mean they want people to find the books that they want to read so it can be tough. For me it works out pretty well because I'm writing squarely within the genre so there's no other place anybody's gonna put my books and there's no other place they really belong. So that's nice. But. I'm going to move on a little bit and talk about another thing I've learned. About being an author and this one isn't specific to romance writing and it's actually not even specific to writing. But. These days everyone seems to have a home office. And so I'm going to give you like a really critical piece of advice and that's when you set up your workspace. Make absolutely sure that you can not reach your refrigerator without getting up from your chair.

[00:09:09] Ok.

[00:09:12] You can laugh but actually my husband's here tonight and he will remember our first apartment together in Berkeley.

[00:09:18] You can wave. So our very first apartment we moved. We did what any like really poor recent college grads would do we moved to the Bay Area and

[00:09:30] We had this really small apartment and he usually goes to bed for ideas so he put his desk in the bedroom and the only other place left for me was this kind of desk quite counter in the kitchen which was like right here in the fridge was like right here and I'm on a rolling chair. So I'm just like

[00:09:47] So I would just say yeah avoid that. That's not a good thing. So here's another interesting thing I've learned. Nobody seems to think you're a real writer unless they've seen your book at the

supermarket. I don't fully understand why this is so but I've had friends kind of wince and give me this look like they think maybe my career's about to fall apart because they were at Safeway and they didn't see my book and clearly like everything's like. Going into a handbasket there. I'm like then I say no no no it's OK. You know Safeway only has you know 40 books at a time and so they only have the new ones. But here's the thing. It's. It's actually really fun when you do see your book at the supermarket. And although I shouldn't I should. Point out that you will never see your book at your supermarket. There's some kind of weird love physics and I don't really understand it. But once you like do all your computations and boil it down it says that no matter. How successful you are. How many books you've written I think even if you get a movie deal your book will never show up at the supermarket or drugstore at which you do your regular shopping.

[00:11:01] It just won't. What

[00:11:08] She's saying is probably good thing no it's not a good thing. I want my stuff I want my book in my supermarket. And I also want my book. I'm going to talk to you over there.

[00:11:15] I would love to see my book at my local branch of my Seattle Public Library. Yeah it turns out you can't donate books to the Seattle Public Library because I've tried I've gone in and be like you want my book and they give me this look like you're really scaring

[00:11:29] And I'm like but I live around the corner and don't you want to have a book on the shelf. They're like We can't accept donations for your problems it's a real book.

[00:11:40] But anyway for me though kind of the most fun moment of seeing your book out we call it like authors like senior book out in the wild. This wasn't even really seeing it but when my very first book came out it was 1995. And guys I remember Walden Books as kind of yeah it's kind of sad but anyway while the books were still around then and my local Wilder books called me and they're just like we got your book in and we sold nine and that was when I realized that nine people who aren't related to me had bought my book. And that was

[00:12:14] That was that was the best. But. I'll just be honest even I've been published now for over two decades and I've had lots of books out and it's still always really really exciting to see your book out there in the wild. I promise you. Pretty much every author in existence like they can not wander through a library bookstore without sort of taking a little detour. I'm just going to peek and see if my books on the shelf and. And then they get back there and are like I'm just going to rearrange things just a little bit. So my book is Face out. So we do that to our parents. Also do it. I've had to warn my dad off because like he gets back there and he starts rearranging the whole thing and then he starts trying to recommend my books to people and I'm like I. Had

[00:12:57] Kind look like the creepy old man in the Romance section. He's like I'm OK with that. I'm not Dad. It's like

[00:13:08] It or the other thing I always do. There's another author confession for you. So I travel a lot. I mean I'm gold on Alaska and so I can tell you after all my flights every time we're walking down to like go to the back of the plane to go to the lab. When we come back we're always looking to see what you're reading. Always.

[00:13:24] It's gotten much harder now that people have e-books but I can report that in my many years of flying I have never seen someone reading one of my books on an airplane. But

[00:13:33] There is not a plane in the sky that does not have somebody reading your Nora Roberts book every freakin time.

[00:13:42] And I told her that once I've met her several times she's like amazing. I think she runs on like Diet Pepsi and cigarettes and she has the most incredible work ethic. And

[00:13:52] I told once I'm like you know there's some BS always reading your plan. She was just like that's great.

[00:13:57] So. And then finally the other thing. I would tell you that I've really learned is that writing is a solitary pursuit but. Being an author gives you this entree into this amazing. World this community of readers and books. And. I know that there are a lot of authors who they'll say look I would write no matter way you know if if nobody is reading my books I will still write because I have to write and I'll be the first one to say I don't have to write. I

[00:14:33] In fact there are a lot of things I'd rather do than write. I really like having written. That's really great. I really like being a writer but I'm lazy. I'd like I like to do other things too. And I don't think I would write if I didn't think people were going to be reading my stories to me that's. Just a really integral part. Of the whole thing. I mean it's you know it's a big old circle and I don't want to write into a vacuum.

[00:15:01] And so this whole new world well not new anymore but when I first started writing the Internet was still really really small. And now you know we get feedback from. Everywhere

[00:15:12] About our books and there are a lot of authors who hate that. But I actually like it. I like to know how people are receiving my books. And for the most part when I see somebody say something critical there's usually something in there where I can be like. You know I might say well you could have said that a little more nicely. But at the same time like there's usually some sort of kernel of truth like they'll say I really didn't like the way she did this and I'd be like you know I knew when I did that some people wouldn't like that or you know I knew that wasn't the strongest part but I did the best I could. And that's you know I just keep trying to do the best I can with each book. But on the flip side hearing from readers about your books. Well it can be interesting. So. Early on in my career. This is back. I don't actually have an email link on my website anymore because I decided I would rather not receive reader mail than not answer it. And I wasn't able to keep up with it. Now I have a Facebook page which you should all like. I'm I'm terrible at Twitter but I'm really good at Facebook. And. People

can leave me comments there but back when I was getting emails from readers I got. And this is my all time favorite this woman writes me is like you would be a really good writer if you would use more nouns verbs and adjectives. I. Just

[00:16:31] I was staring at my computer for the longest time thinking I must be like the most amazing writer ever. I can write an entire novel and adverbs and prepositions. It's you know like you read it. So. And then. Another. One is that readers will start catching every mistake you make

[00:16:52] And you do make mistakes. If you've been if you've read the new book I know about the typo. I promise. We're trying to fix it. But what's really kind of funny and I've decided I'm going to take this as a compliment is that when I do hear from readers now about mistakes in my books I would say at least 90 percent of the time now it's a mistake I've made against my own fictional world. So it's not like I'm got something wrong in real history. It's like I got something wrong in like my fictional history. And my favorite example of this is a little while ago I read a book and I came up there while ago it was called just like heaven. And often I like to put little Easter eggs in the books for the readers. You know people who've read a lot of the books they could be like Oh I know who she's talking about you know in the new reader would have no clue in it that's fine. So I was doing this writing the scene and I was thinking how we all do this thing where you know we're trying to explain to somebody who someone is and we're just like oh you know it's it's like you know her on neighbors friends brothers you know that sort of thing. So I thought well of course people did that 200 years ago right. So I put that in there and it was clear if you'd read my earlier books who I was talking about. Now if you hadn't read my earlier books it just was kind of this fun little joke about me talking of people being like oh you know the answer whatever. Well in order for that to be correct that you knew who was talking about the guy would have had have been married

[00:18:18] Right. And then later in. The book I had him like as a bit character and he was single

[00:18:25] So I didn't catch this My editor didn't catch this my copy didn't catch this my sister who read it didn't catch it. And I have to defend myself by saying that if you hadn't read my earlier books there's nothing within the boundaries of this one novel that's incorrect. But I heard from readers about this three hours after the book went on sale. Yeah. And that book came out a while ago and I'm still hearing from readers about that. And so I've just decided that's a good thing. Like if my readers are that invested in my fictional world that they're gonna notice that I think that's awesome. And then. Finally I wanted to share with you

[00:19:06] Speaking of the interaction with readers and knowing how your work affects others. Every now and then you hear from a reader and it kind of stops you in your tracks and you realize that even if you're not saving the world from Ebola

[00:19:21] Although I actually do have a friend who's a romance author who is saving the world from Ebola. Her day job is at the CDC so you should all read books by Jennifer my question because we should support her. But. I'm not saving the world from Ebola. But I think I'm still doing something

pretty important and I'm going to read you a letter that sort of showed me that that hopefully that's true

[00:19:43] Says Dear Miss Quinn. This is an old one but. I want to thank you for the enjoyment you bring to your readers. I'm a 23 year old wife of almost six years and a mother of a five year old.

[00:19:54] The first book I read of yours first book of yours I read was how to Mary Maki and I was instantly ensnared in the historical romance genre and soon after I bought all your books. My mother was a strict Stephen King fan or fan of suspense novels and she told me that romance books were sappy. I convinced her to read the Duke and I and she quickly turned to the Viscount who loved me. She was constantly telling me to hurry up and finish your book so she could read it. On Valentine's Day of 2001 my mom was diagnosed with lung cancer. Each chemo treatment was anywhere from two to six hours long. I was what they call a caregiver for my mother. I was at every doctor's appointment every chemo and radiation treatment with my mom so you can imagine how much reading we did during treatments. They had these ugly blue leather recliners for us to sit in during chemo and I remember the day that an offer from a gentleman came out. She insisted that we stop and get it before heading to the chemo center. I was sitting there already and page fifty forty five minutes into the treatment and I hear this really loud sound that sounded like my mother had tutored. I looked over at her and she looked quickly away from me. I was not about to embarrass her by bringing it to her attention but 10 minutes later I heard the same sound and I looked over again and my mom was trying extremely hard not to laugh. I asked what was so funny and she said nothing. So I went back to reading and I hear it again not five minutes later and I looked at my mom and said Mom do you need me to get a nurse to unhook you so you can go to the bathroom.

[00:21:15] She just busted out laughing and I said I swear it wasn't me. I looked around her little cubicle and back at her as if to say we're alone. Who else could it be. She sat back in her chair and then leaned toward me again and there was that sound. She laughed and said I've been trying to read over your shoulder but every time I lean toward you the chair sounds like I farted. There are quite a few hospital visits that consisted of 12 hour days and then coming home to my son and husband. When romancing Mr. Bridge came out. I passed it to my mom after reading it and soon after she was back in the hospital. Three days later my mom died on August 3rd 2002. Her name was Donna Dudley and she was 39 years old. She would have turned 40 on December 22nd. She'd been trying to finish the book because she knew her time was short. She didn't get to and I had forgotten all about it until I unpacked her bag from the hospital and I noticed it wasn't there. I had to go back to that room to get it. That was hard but I finished reading it to her at her grave site. My point in all this is that while we were already best friends and while their illness brought us closer sharing a common interest in books gave us just that much more to talk and laugh about. Thank you.

[00:22:28] So it's things like that. I think that teach me the most about my own career as a writer and what. That what I do matters and is important that I can open up someone's mind and heart that way. So thank you and I'm if we've time I'm happy to read or just start with a station. So if you'd like I can take questions or I can read from the Booker. Yes. Sir. So the question is Where do I base to do my historical research primarily online now. Obviously it's much easier now with the Internet. Although

you have to be very careful about using your sources on the Internet. Wikipedia is not a reliable source. I have librarians here in the audience. They could tell you that. A lot of I kind of joke that when I research my books

[00:23:18] I have very broad and shallow knowledge of the period meaning that there are a lot of things I don't have to look up I don't have to look up how you address it. Duke I don't have to look up a lot of the social customs and so when I'm starting a book I generally. Don't need to do a lot of research when I get started and I tend to look things up as I go along. And it's the it's the strangest things that you end up looking at. For example I was writing a book awhile back and somebody made a joke about Little Bo Peep and I remember I was writing along and usually I don't laugh at my own jokes when I'm writing but this time I did and something I'm like I'm so funny. And then

[00:23:53] I thought oh my gosh what's the earliest known reference of Little Bo Peep. Right. I don't know. And it turns out it Shakespeare so I was ok but there've been plenty of other times where I've done something and then thought oh my gosh what's the earliest known reference of such and such and discovered that actually I can't use that

[00:24:09] Might. My. Wife is my least favorite example because I really wanted to use it is the pen is mightier than the sword which I assumed was Shakespeare tis not maybe the only thing that sounds like that that's not Shakespeare it's actually Edward Boyle were Lleyton who is famous for having written the worst opening line in the history of novels. It was a dark and stormy night. In fact there's now an entire contest. Named for Edward. Well we're Lleyton too right. The opening line with the worse novel ever written. I highly encourage you all to look into Bill Lleyton contest every year it's really funny but he did do the pen is mightier than the sword.

[00:24:46] We kind of did the best and the worst.

[00:24:51] So the question is just how do I keep all the characters straight. Because so I've written 25 novels and two novellas and stuff like that and not all the books. But many of them you know these characters inhabit the same world. And so I'll often you know if I have to say oh so-and-so dance with someone at this party I'll often bring in the name of a character that I've used in another book because it's fun for readers.

[00:25:14] And it's also one fewer name than I have to make up. And I'll tell you a USE YOU REALIZE THAT THERE'S ONLY YOUR BRAIN WORKS IN LIKE REALLY specific ways because I have you know I have this character named Lady whistle down who's a gossip columnist. And. I thought oh that's a great name. So I used it in like four books into it someone's like you know you had like you know a Mrs whistle Mister whistle down in another book and it's like I did you know I had no idea I did that. So it's tough. But. I would say you should have many authors do what they call have a Bible where they try to keep track of everything and I have a few documents I'm not the best. At that

[00:25:54] Mainly because a lot of times when I write series I don't necessarily intend to write a long series The Bridge in series which had eight books in it was originally supposed to be three. If I had

known I was going to write in a book series I probably would have been a little bit more organized about it at the beginning. There a couple times I really wrote myself into a corner and was kind of like oh gosh what am I going to do. Like I realized I was gonna have three books in a row with like 28 year old spinsters as the heroines and I thought why can't have three in a row right.

[00:26:27] When are we going to do so. Three books into the series I just said one of them had been widowed and I didn't say anything. And then of course I get to that book and thought oh my gosh now I have to figure out why she's a widow. And

[00:26:38] Surely this is how so many things happen like people ask me so I should talk a little bit about this book since this is why I'm here. But the girl with the make believe husband takes place in colonial era New York

[00:26:48] Which was very new for me and involved quite a bit more research. And people say Why did you do that is it because of Hamilton. And I'm like No I can't get tickets to Hamilton. I mean can you be nice. If you know how let me know. No it's because in the book before this the hero's younger brother who's the Army captain Captain goes missing in the colonies because it's set in 1779 so that's where the British Army is. And it kind of ended that way. And I was like Oh. All right. So he's over there and now I can either like start the book there or can be like you know move it forward by like five years and be like oh everything worked out we're now we're here. And I thought OK. That seems like the easy way out. So I started the book in New York and I kind of intended for them to move back to England but they never actually made it it didn't work out that way. But the point is a lot of things that authors do come about because we have written ourselves into corners and have to desperately find our way out. Yeah. So she said she's here with her best friend which I think is awesome that you're sharing books that way. And she's running off sometimes I talk about my characters as if they're real people and people look at me weird. People do look at me weird a lot but not usually because of that. I have many other things I do that make people look at me strange. I don't do that with my characters. I'm. I'm an author and you know and it's. It's kind of not a very romantic thing to say because I think people think of authors as like living and breathing their characters but I really turn it off. I you know I

[00:28:30] I finish writing and I'm like oh you know let's go watch the walking dead which is the new thing I'm hooked I'm totally hooked on that right now and don't tell me anything. I'm only in season two. But yeah I don't. Like if I mean. Something like this where you know it's about books an hour I'm in a book conference or something then yeah of course I'm doing that.

[00:28:50] But in everyday life they kind of so no sorry but I do plenty of other weird things I promise. Yes. So the question is what made me get into historical romance and never ever thought about branching out other genres. I started writing historical romance because it was what I like to read. I mean it was as simple as that. And in fact any writer I know if you ask them why'd you become a writer it's because they like to read. Have I thought about branching out. Yes but only if I came up with a really good idea and I don't really think I have. I mean I have enough trouble come in with good ideas from my historical romance frankly. I mean I have a lot of friends who have like 40 books

plotted out on their head and I'm always amazed. I am not that person. I'm you know. I get done with one I'm like oh my gosh what am I going to do with the next book. I mean all you want to hear a secret. So this book this is not a spoiler but at the very end of the book. Oh here I'll read from it and read from the last page.

[00:29:50] Ok. So. They get together in the end. That's it.

[00:29:54] I hope that doesn't.

[00:29:57] I don't think that really gives anything away that like at the end of the book they're like in love. OK. So anyway they've gone back to England and she's meeting his family for the first time and

[00:30:10] Let's see where I'm tracking where to start here.

[00:30:13] So that basically they're asking about it. OK. So Edward smiled. Mother and father in the village George said they should be back within the hour.

[00:30:19] So this is George's the older brother of the hero of this book. And he's the hero of the previous book. Edward smiled broadly. Excellent and the rest. Nicholas is at school Billy said. And of course Mary has her own home now. And Andrew Andrew the third brother Edward had told to Sylvia that he was in the Navy. Is he here. Edward asked. George made a sound that Cecilia could not interpret. One might have called it a chuckle if it weren't so liberally laced with something better described as awkward resignation. Shall you tell him or shall I. Billy said George took a breath. Well now that it's quite a story.

[00:30:54] Okay so like obviously like right next book about Andrew.

[00:30:56] Do you think I have a clue what that story is. No I don't know.

[00:31:04] I was like I needed to end the book and I was like All right here's a hook. I kind of did this with this one too. So. That's me saying like I don't have that many ideas. I finished the book and be like OK I'm going to end it this way to force me to come up with a perfect tip. So I think. I'm not a super fast writer and I still really enjoy what I'm doing now

[00:31:27] And I'm getting paid pretty nicely for it and so I figured that as long as I'm enjoying it and I'm making a living it doesn't make sense to change it up. And if I were faster and I could write like something in addition to what I'm doing I might try something new. But if I were to try something new and it would have to be instead of. And I'm not really ready to do that. Yet. So the caution is which romance writers inspired me when I was starting out. Well I read a lot of Amanda quick and she lives right here in Seattle. And so that's great. I read a lot of Julie Garwood Judith McNaught. Lisa capers who's also a Washington romance writer now she lives in Bellingham. They're a lot of romance authors in Washington State

[00:32:12] Join a Lindsay Jude Devereaux.

[00:32:16] All the really great romance authors their names begin with J. So I like. I was born for this. Yes. So the question the first part of the question is how basically how long does it take me to write a book. And I would say about six to nine months and that includes the whole process of trying to figure out what the heck I'm going to write about like I'm putting together a proposal which isn't really like an outline it's sort of like a summary and I do a lot of characterisation and that takes a lot longer than I feel like it ever should.

[00:32:45] So that's about six to nine months. The second part was how. Do I start the next one before the process of the previous one is over. Like maybe like I finish up the manuscript in like now it's time to go into edits and I start the next one. No I I would be great if I did I'd be much faster but I just you know I'm just so excited when I'm done I'm like oh you know I'm taking a break and I'm only going to take a break for two weeks and then like you know the whole summer goes by and I'm like I will say getting back to Noor Roberts who the woman with incredible work ethic. She finishes a book and takes three days off and starts another book.

[00:33:22] I know. I think I want to be her later but. Yes up there. On

[00:33:29] My own. So the question is do I have a favorite book or character my own. I don't have a favorite book that's kind of like asking me to pick a favorite kid. And I'm not going to do that because they're both here so. That you can come up to me later. In terms of a favorite character what's interesting is the characters I think who've come to mean the most to me are the ones who are not necessarily my. Heroes or heroines but some secondary characters who I've been able to

[00:34:01] Watch through many many books because so Violet Bridgeton who is the mother of the bridge pertains to people who are main characters they're really in one book and maybe show up a little in another one but Violet was an eight books. So I actually spent a lot more time with her than any of the main heroes and heroines. And if you start at the beginning of the series she's kind of a little bit of a stock character. But as the series went on and I got to know where she really became a lot deeper. And then also lady Danbury who is this crotchety old lady who's been in a bunch of different books and I almost killed her off once. I know I know. It was going to be like this big dramatic moment in the book oh she's patting her like no no don't worry no she will never die I'm saying it now because she's it's too much fun to write her and I mean I feel like she was. What

[00:34:56] She would shake your cane at you. I mean this is the woman who like managed to break someone's violin with a cane once like it was an accident. So she's also become a big favorite as well. Three more questions OK. Is it well is there anybody who hasn't asked a question yet who would like to. Yes. So the question was how was it had it feel going from writing in the time her to the early eighteen hundreds which almost all my books have been to the late 17 hundreds which my last two books have been you know not that different. At first it had sort of let's look up the clothing a little more to me. And I don't I'm not one of the writers who spends a lot of time describing clothing but I sort of felt like I had to still get it right so doing bits of research the the bigger shock to the system was

moving from England to America. And and a big part of that was because I actually grew up near New York. And so I had to make sure that I was using

[00:35:51] You know historical information and not my contemporary knowledge of the area. So that was that was a bigger thing. Doing research on you know what was going on in New York at the time what it what does it mean to be in an occupied city because. You know

[00:36:06] At the time 1779 when this book takes place in New York City is occupied by the British so pretty much all the characters are British. And that was another crazy thing to be writing a book set during Revolutionary War time in the United States but where your main characters are British. So the good guys are British. Well we're always taught you know they're the bad guys now have to make them good guys without making the enemy the bad guys because I don't want like the Americans to be the bad guys right. So it's it was kind of tricky to figure out how to balance all of that. Which people haven't asked a question. Right there. So the question is have I ever been writing and realized that

[00:36:45] When my characters was inspired by somebody I don't particularly like. And if so what happens. No but

[00:36:53] This seems to be a bigger issue for mystery writers. And I will tell you I. I did this talk once. It was the most bizarre set of authors ever it was for. Borders Books was having like this meeting where for all their assistant regional managers or something and they brought in some authors to speak in with me. This guy who'd written this camera whose name he'd written this nonfiction book about this Nazi submarine that was found off the coast of New Jersey.

[00:37:23] Diane Mont Davidson who writes cozy mysteries you know like a double shot. I don't know what her and Chuck Palahniuk who wrote the fight club. OK so this is like the four of us. I'm not gonna go into it like the Czech Pollyanna talk because that was. I mean it had to do with like you know online ratings of prostitutes and stuff and they they're I'm like talking like like happy fun romance author. But as it turns out when I met Diane Davidson. The guy who did the counters in my kitchen had done her kitchen. She I was living in Colorado and she was two and she was like. I hated him. I killed him off in a book.

[00:38:02] And so yeah so.

[00:38:06] So I think mystery authors they have a lot more fun they can do that. And then it's right there. Yes. So the question is. So with this current series I went back on time and have I ever thought about going forward and doing the next generation to look at the kids and grandkids at the or turns into the Victorian age. I would never say never. I mean I might you know. I mean it would be kind of fun to see these other characters as protective parents or whatever it is a little tough because the Victorian times gets into first some like really ugly clothing.

[00:38:37] The early Victorian has like really ugly clothes but you know I don't describe the clothes that much anyway so we might be able to get away without that. And also but it becomes a much

more sort of puritanical society. So I'd have to think about that. I'll be honest again as I said since I'm one of these people who. Really rarely has more than one idea at a time. I'm just trying to get through this series and then we'll see what I'm going do. But I would never say never to that

[00:39:05] And then I needed one more. But he's had his hand out so I'm gonna. Oh how do I decide when I'm finally done editing.

[00:39:11] I'm not necessarily the best person to ask that question to you because I don't write drafts the way a lot of authors will go through without a first draft and I'll keep going back. I'm somebody who writes and is constantly editing as I go along. So I'm to go backwards so I'm like this

[00:39:28] Which I need to do it. You just imagine I need do it my career. I'm like this

[00:39:33] So constantly going back a little bit. Then every now and then I go back a lot to sort of see a little more. But what that means because I'm constantly doing it is that when I get to the end of the book I'm pretty much done. So I don't really have a first draft. And so this whole when you know you're done editing. When I get to the last chapter pretty much. And then after that then I'll do one more pass through to look for you like awkward sentences and stuff like that. But I'm pretty much done at that point. And then also and this again is not I think what people want to hear from authors and I don't mean to impugn the creative process at all but I also kind of know I'm done when like my editors call me up saying like we need this manuscript right now or you're gonna mess up the entire publication schedule.

[00:40:17] Okay here it is. And often that's how we figure it out. So. So

[00:40:26] I have no closing words of wisdom. Let's be honest.

[00:40:32] I guess that if you are an aspiring writer my biggest piece of advice if you're writing romances for example join romance writers of America. It's an incredible writing organization. If you're writing mysteries look into mystery writers of America. But find a writers association you'll get so much information about both the craft of writing but also the business of writing. So if you're somebody like me who wants their work to be read whether it's because you'd like to earn a living which I will say is nice or because you simply want people to read what you're writing then it is a business as well. And it's nice to have something to help you learn about how that all works. Thank you. Applause

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