



WSIRN Episode [number]: [Title]
Hosted by Anne Bogel, with guest [name]

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LIBERTY: Depending on how much was going on in my life, what was happening, the year I discovered World of Warcraft, I read 3-7 books, maybe? [ANNE LAUGHS] So at the end of that year, I was like, goodbye, World of Warcraft.

[CHEERFUL INTRO MUSIC]

[BOTH LAUGH]

ANNE: Hey readers. I'm Anne Bogel, and this is What Should I Read Next? Episode 180. Welcome to the show that's dedicated to answering the question that plagues every reader: What should I read next? We don't get bossy on this show: What we WILL do here is give you the information you need to choose your next read. Every week we'll talk all things books and reading, and do a little literary matchmaking with one guest.

Readers, this week I want to tell you about another interesting literary podcast called [But That's Another Story](#). It's a show about how the books we love can change us.

*Bestselling author Will Schwalbe talks to influential guests about the books that have meant the most to them in their lives. I'm sure you won't be surprised to hear that the very first episode I listened to was with author Louise Penny. That's a great place to dive in. And next, you can hear Jodie Foster talk about how reading *Franny and Zooey* by J.D. Salinger convinced her to put her acting career on hold so she could go to college and form a community.*

*And then hear from NPR's Sam Sanders discuss how *New People* by Danzy Senna changed the way he thinks about race.*

It's a beautiful show full of moving stories. Find [But That's Another Story](#) wherever you get your podcasts.

Today's guest is reading speed-demon Liberty Hardy, professional book nerd and host of Book Riot's All the Books podcast. Together we're going deep into a book labyrinth, discussing truly committed bookworm questions like "how do you avoid back strain while reading for hours on end?", "how do I smuggle 1000 books out of my house safely" and "what does Kate Atkinson's grocery list look like?" We're even playing a Tom Stoppard-inspired literary game that miiiiight destroy your TBR.

I think you'll find Liberty just as delightful as I did (I mean, she describes herself as unrepentant velocireader, how could you not?) so what are we waiting for? Let's get to it!

Liberty, welcome to the show.

[00:02:16]

LIBERTY: Thank you so much for having me. I'm so excited about this.

ANNE: It's so much fun to talk about books with people who love books, which is something we both get to do all the time in different ways and different spaces.

LIBERTY: We are extremely fortunate.

ANNE: So I know what you do because I'm a book person in the book space. But when you like, I don't know, run into a new neighbor you haven't met on the sidewalk and they say, Liberty, what do you do? How do you answer them?

LIBERTY: I say I'm a book enthusiast. I do a little of this, a little of that. Actually read for a living which is like the most amazing dream job ever. I work for Book Riot, writing a lot of newsletters for them. I do their All the Books podcast. I'm one of the bibliogists for their get books recommendations service. I'm a judge for book of the month and I also just talk about books in assorted other places online, everywhere. At people that don't even want to hear about it on the street. I just talk about books.

ANNE: [LAUGHS] You know, I am still having a hard time getting the word bibliogist to roll off my tongue.

LIBERTY: It is a little awkward, but it's a really fun program and it's going really well.

ANNE: How long have you been reading for a living?

LIBERTY: Four years? Full time now. So I mean I've been reading since I was very, very little every day, all day. [BOTH LAUGH] You know, so I've been preparing for this for a long time, but I just had to get a lot of retail work out of the way first. [LAUGHS]

ANNE: So you were born for it. That's a good point. Okay let's go waaay back. What was young Liberty like as a reader? Was the writing on the wall that this would be where you were all these years later?

LIBERTY: Absolutely. My mother is a librarian or she was a librarian when I was little. So I was like at the library all the time as a small child, reading on my own by the time I was four. And I spent all my time at the library, mostly reading a lot of things that I probably shouldn't have been reading. [ANNE LAUGHS]

My mother just-

ANNE: No, no, expand on that please.

[00:04:03]

LIBERTY: [LAUGHS] Oh like when I was like 10 years old, I was reading John Updike and John Irving and Cindy Sheldon. All these things that I knew were really popular at the library. I think that's where I learned to read so fast was because my mother would just let me go off into the stacks, but if I tried to bring some of those things home, she would have been like, "No, no, no, no." [ANNE LAUGHS] So I think that's where I acquired my fast reading skills.

And it was a dream. I mean, just spending time in the library every day and it runs in the family. I mean my mother reads all the time. My niece is six. She's reading the *Harry Potters* on her own. It's like genetic apparently. [LAUGHS]

ANNE: Just diving right in. It's funny. I talk to a lot of avid adult readers who ... I mean, definitely not all, but many avid adult readers say that when they were a kid, their parents let them read whatever. They couldn't watch whatever, but they could read whatever they wanted. I think their parents were trusting that they wouldn't scar themselves too deeply. [LAUGHS] And that they didn't want to, you know, tell their kids, "No, that book is not for you." At any point.

LIBERTY: Yeah. And now when I'm reading things, I'm like, oh my goodness, I wouldn't want children to read this or I wouldn't want my, you know, niece to read this. But I have gone back and read some of the things I read as a child, like *the Witches of Eastwick*, for instance. And I realize that a lot of what was going on in that book went right over my head. You know, so I think like kids pick up on some stuff, but you have to give them some credit and also some things just go right over their heads. [BOTH LAUGH]

ANNE: So four years ago, you made the transition to reading for a living. Was that an abrupt shift for you?

LIBERTY: Not exactly. I mean, I'd been working for Book Riot for a few years before that. I was working as a bookseller in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, which is a job that I love and someday hope to get back to doing. The time was right. Things were kinda slow at the store. I needed a change. My health wasn't great at the time. It just kind've segwayed into it. It's been amazing.

ANNE: Okay, so I've heard a rumor. Actually it's possible it's a true fact shared by you. [LIBERTY LAUGHS] Something about 600 books a year.

LIBERTY: Yes.

ANNE: Okay.

LIBERTY: My last couple of years of reading, I've hit over 600 books. Personal best. [LAUGHS]

ANNE: How big of a change was that for you compared to like five years ago?

[00:05:05]

LIBERTY: Couple hundred books.

ANNE: Okay.

LIBERTY: I was doing between two and 400 depending on how much was going on in my life, what was happening. The year that I discovered World of Warcraft, I read 3, 7 books [ANNE LAUGHS] So at the end of that year, I was like, goodbye, World of Warcraft. I still miss it. People are like how do you read so much? How do you read so fast? And I wish I had like a secret answer for them, like a special like you eat chocolate cake and you can read all these books, but I don't. It's literally that I read 10 to 17 hours a day. I sleep very little, which is really bad for you. Like don't try this at home, kids. [ANNE LAUGHS] And I read all day.

ANNE: I got a recent question from a reader who said I have a problem. I spend a lot of time reading. Do you have any posture tips? So, Liberty. Where do you read 10 to 17 hours a day? Cause I'm pretty sure this reader who was concerned about her posture, was reading a little less than that.

LIBERTY: I start off reading in the morning. First thing when I wake up, I roll over and I start reading a book. So I'm lying down in bed. Then I get up and I move to my desk and I do a lot of reading on my laptop. I know a lot of people like to read electronically on devices, but I use my laptop which I find is great.

ANNE: What do you like about the laptop?

LIBERTY: I think that I can read more. As much as I love holding like physical copies of books, I think that I can make the font really big and I don't even really have to move my eyes to just read down the screen and just keep scrolling. I think I can take a lot of it in that way. It seems to work for me really well. So I do that sitting at my desk and then I do it standing up with my laptop on a bookshelf in front of me. Like I like to stand, try to get up and move around a lot when I'm reading. And then I end the day sitting on the couch and then lying down, falling asleep reading. [BOTH LAUGH]

ANNE: What's your rhythm for reading, writing about reading, talking about reading? Do you have a time of day that you prefer to write as opposed to actually read?

LIBERTY: I don't. I usually have deadlines and I'm one of those people that waits until the very last minute to do things. It seems to work well for me, like I need that added pressure behind me. So it depends on when I have something due or also galley's expire off laptops. I heard that on kindles and stuff, if you get an e-galley, it doesn't expire, which is amazing. But I need that pressure behind me [LAUGHS] to force me to read things otherwise I would just keep downloading them and never reading them.

ANNE: [LAUGHS] Oh. I might be hanging my head right now.

[00:08:17]

LIBERTY: No, no shame at all! But it's like I need to read some things for work and they would just sit there. Because I'd be like ooh, a new book. Ooh, a new book. Ooh, a new book! Like all the time. So the pressure of having something that's going to expire that I need for work, motivates me to read things at certain times and then on the weekends, I try to read what I'm interested in. New things that are coming up that I'm excited about that I'll probably talk about, but also like some ... I'm trying to put in some more back list.

ANNE: To read 600 books a year. Now I know a lot of people will hear that and think, there's no way I could. And I'm not saying that's a goal by any means, but aside from quitting your job, where you couldn't read full time, were there any structural changes you made in your life to enable you to read that kind of volume?

LIBERTY: Yes. I moved in with my boyfriend, so I was not working all the time to try to pay the rent by myself. I have a house now. We live in a house. I used to live in a tiny, tiny, tiny little apartment downtown that was very loud and just noisy and things going on all the time. So now I'm like in a quiet house, in a quiet office. My boyfriend is a musician, so he spends a lot of his time playing music in his room and I sit in my room and read. And it's like a lot of uninterrupted time and it's amazing.

The only interruptions now are the kittens. [BOTH LAUGH]

ANNE: Which if you're listening and you don't follow Liberty on Instagram, share your handle, please.

LIBERTY: It's [franzcomesalive](#).

ANNE: And I don't know the story behind it, but there must be one.

LIBERTY: Yes. I'm in my 40s and when I was little, the Peter Frampton Live Album, Frampton Comes Alive, was like the biggest selling live album of all time and so when I was trying to come up with an Instagram handle, I was like I wanted something that said like books rock! But it

kinda backfired because a lot of readers are younger than me and [LAUGHS] they think I just really like Jonathan Franzen, which is not the case. [BOTH LAUGH]

But he's fine, whatever. But like it's really about like books rock.

ANNE: Go check out franzencomesalive so you can see the adorable kittens. Who seem to coexist just fine with your stacks and stacks.

LIBERTY: Yes, surprisingly, only knocked books over a couple of times. They're more into chewing. I don't know which is worse. Probably the chewing. They like to chew on my books. They like to chew on everything, as I was telling you before we started talking. They chewed through my laptop cord this morning. They just chew everything. It's like I'm destined to have cats that chew on books.

[00:10:29]

ANNE: Liberty, what's the upside of reading at that volume? I know many people dream that they could get through the stacks and stacks of books or the long, long TBR that they have.

LIBERTY: You know, it might sound hooky, but I really feel like recommending books is my calling. Like after all this time, and I felt it when I worked as a bookseller, too. I don't have any skills. I don't have any education. I don't have any special talents except reading, and I love being able to know as much about as many books as I can to help people find books that make them happy because I think that reading is a pleasure and a joy like nothing else for people. So I love being able to tell them about as many things as I possibly can that will bring them that kind of happiness.

ANNE: How do you track what you read? Or do you feel like you do have the gift of being able to recall the right book at the right time? That's something I struggle with. If it wasn't written down, I think I would remember maybe a quarter of the books that I actually read.

LIBERTY: Yeah. I keep a spreadsheet. You know, as I get older, I find I'm often going back going, didn't I read a book by that title? Especially thrillers, mysteries and thrillers, I mix up in my head all the time now. When I'm trying to remember like, which was the one where like the penguin murdered the person with the icicle? [ANNE LAUGHS] And then drove the sports car ... you know, like, I just can't keep the details straight anymore. If it's like a few years out [LAUGHS] I'm like forget it. [LAUGHS]

ANNE: So what do you track in the spreadsheet?

LIBERTY: I usually keep a synopsis. I actually used to keep a really detailed group of journals because I'm kind of like a data nerd, but it took me like half an hour to enter a book each time I finished one, so I was like, this is like reading time I could be ... I could just cut this out and so I just started keeping like title, author, publisher, date I read it basically.

ANNE: I really relate to that. I mean, I enjoy copying down my favorite quotes and all that, but I could be reading.

LIBERTY: I've worked so I can shave off as much time doing anything else, so I can just read.

ANNE: What's the downside reading at that volume?

LIBERTY: I don't really see a downside to it. [LAUGHS] It's how you choose to spend your time. Right like I don't watch very much TV. I don't go out of the house very often. It's what I like to do, you know. So if you want to have a lot of friends and a social life [LAUGHS] and go to the movies and do things, this is now how you read 600 books a year. [BOTH LAUGH]

[00:12:40]

ANNE: Now you've said that you're reading on deadline or for assignment. For people who do not exist in that space, what are you working on this week? What are your assignments that are on your front burner?

LIBERTY: I'm doing things for the podcast each week. I do the All the Books podcast for Book Riot, so I used to read really, really far out, like six months, you know, nine months out and as I've gotten older, [LAUGHS] I've learned that I don't remember as much, so I started reading like a lot closer to their release date.

ANNE: No, it would never happen to me. I'm sure it's only you. [LAUGHS] This is happening to.

LIBERTY: [LAUGHS] Yes, it's just me. [BOTH LAUGH] I got a concussion from a book once. So I'm sure that's probably what the problem is.

ANNE: You've got to tell us more about that.

LIBERTY: Oh, well, it was *Hold Still*, the Sally Mann biography which you've actually hold onto it, the hardcover copy, is quite permissible and I was trying to-

ANNE: I read it on eBook! I didn't realize that was like a personal safety choice though.

LIBERTY: [LAUGHS] You were spared. As you can imagine, I have a lot of stacks of books in my house and I had it up on a big, tall bookcase. I had this big stack of books and I was trying to reach something underneath it, and it fell and hit me square in the top of the head.

ANNE: Oh, Liberty!

LIBERTY: And I got a concussion. Which is kind of cool aside from like the concussion part, it was like yeah, I got a concussion from a book. Like [LAUGHS] Work related.

ANNE: [LAUGHS] Just your usual run-of-the-mill professional hazard.

LIBERTY: Yeah. So what I'm doing this week is basically what it is I pick four titles which I'm really interested in. I'll read anything and everything if someone tells me it's good. If someone's whose opinion I trust. You know, you need to read this romance novel about ferrets. Like I will read it. [ANNE LAUGHS] I pick like the four I'm most excited about that I have copies of. It usually works out well for me. These are good, but occasionally it's, oh no, I don't enjoy this. And so then I move on to the next one and sometimes it's like two or three. You have those weeks every once in a while, where it's like I'm not enjoying any of this, is it me? Or is it the book.

So I'm going to check out four books for the April 2nd show that we're going to be recording tomorrow and I'm super excited about those. I've already read two of them. I only have two more to read.

[00:14:42]

ANNE: Is that typical for you? That you get to talk about them while they're fresh in your mind, newly read?

LIBERTY: Yes. I used to be like I just got the new Kate Atkinson and I would read it right then, but then when it was time to record the show, I'd be like ... I don't remember the characters' names, I don't remember exactly what happened here, so I'd have to go back and read it again. So now I try to be more patient and wait.

ANNE: I really relate to that. The enthusiasm of a title you can't wait to read, arriving on your doorstep.

LIBERTY: Now does this ever happened to you? You ever get something that you were so excited to read that you cannot bring yourself to read it? Like it's just too much, you're too excited, what if it's not good? You've been waiting for it so long, like almost delaying it-

ANNE: Yeah, no. I mean [LIBERTY LAUGHS] I understand this is a real thing for a lot of people and I understand why. Maybe I'm one of those kids who wouldn't be able to resist the marshmallow. That's a possibility. [LIBERTY LAUGHS] But no, if a book comes and I'm really excited to read it, I read it right away.

LIBERTY: Yeah.

ANNE: Unless I have to be a very good, like self-controlled girl and like finish my big project or something first. Or finish something I have to read, but we're talking about a matter of like days or weeks, not five months. And also really begrudgingly doing so because it seems like adult necessity. Do you find yourself doing that?

LIBERTY: Yeah, every once in a while. There are certain authors that I get so excited that I just have to wait for a little bit before I can bring myself to read it. And usually it's not because I don't think it's going to be any good because these are like the authors that I love the most, so I know it will be, but I just get so excited. I don't deserve this yet. I'm not ready for it yet. [BOTH LAUGH] I'm going to save this for when I need it.

ANNE: If there is an author you love who, I mean, you can only write a book so fast, then if you've been waiting for it for a long time and it's finally here and you read it in a day and you're done. And you're waiting another year or more.

LIBERTY: Yeah.

[00:16:22]

ANNE: Who are your authors like that?

LIBERTY: Oh, Elizabeth McCracken. I just absolutely love her. Edward P. Jones. It's been a long time, a long, long, long time since we've heard something from him. Donna Tartt, who writes a book every ten years. [BOTH LAUGH] So that's not really helpful. Let's see, Megan Abbott, I love everything she does. Sarah Grand. There's so many authors. I just get so excited to read their books. I'm like [GASP] I have to wait; I have to wait.

Right now I'm doing that with a Kate Atkinson. Like I read the first few pages of *Big Sky*, which comes out in June. But now I'm like [GASP] I'm going to hold off for a little bit longer.

ANNE: Have you read all the books in the Jackson Brodie series? I was surprised that she was returning to that series for her next one.

LIBERTY: It's so exciting, though. Although I have to say, I thought her historical fiction was unparalleled. I mean just amazing, so I would take whatever. Like she could write a grocery list and I would buy it and read it every day for the rest of my life.

ANNE: I would love to see Kate Atkinson's grocery list actually.

LIBERTY: Yeah.

ANNE: Liberty, if [LAUGHS] ... Well I was going to say if something happened and you had to read a lot less, something did happen. *Hold Still* hit you in the head. [LIBERTY LAUGHS] But if you suddenly, I don't know, encountered a perverse, like genie in reverse and could only read 100 books a year, how would you choose?

LIBERTY: I guess it would depend on the circumstances. If it was like, I could only read a 100 books a year and I was still doing it for work, it'd be new releases, but one of the things that I miss and it's still like a Cadillac problem, I miss going into a bookstore and not knowing what's on the shelves. Like I miss just going in and going, this sounds interesting. I'm going to get this.

If it was a case of where I wasn't working in books anymore, I think that would be the driving factor again. I go in a bookstore and be like, what's that? What's that? What's that? But being able to read as much as I do and learn all about books is way, way better than going into a bookstore and not knowing what all the books are on the shelves. [LAUGHS]

ANNE: Readers, you've probably heard me say this before, especially if you read my blog, Modern Mrs. Darcy, but I love the way productivity author, Laura Vanderkam says that there are two activities that don't take time, they create time. She's talking about exercise and sleep. But today I'd like to suggest that PrepDish actually helps create time in your week.

PrepDish is the email-based, meal planning system that delivers delicious meals right to your inbox. You get complete meal plans, grocery lists, and their time-saving prep system makes daily meal-time a breeze. Once each week, you do all of the chopping, marinating, and mixing and because the different meals have some overlap in ingredients the prep goes really quickly.

Then even on the busiest days, we can get dinner on the table in a flash. Dinners like mustard-dill salmon with asparagus and purple potatoes, chicken and bell pepper tacos with jicama and guacamole, and shrimp stir fry with broccoli and carrots over rice

You can take care of your meal planning for the whole year RIGHT NOW with a premium PrepDish subscription—no matter what diet fits your lifestyle—they have Paleo, Gluten Free, or even Keto options.

Keto is hot this year. If you're Keto-curious you can now try Prepdish's Keto menu free for two weeks. There's no need to guess what to eat, you'll get recipes for meals and fat bombs, those high calorie snacks that keep your carb intake low.

With Prep Dish, you shop once, prep once, and then enjoy delicious home cooked meals for the whole week in just 20-30 minutes a day. Check out PrepDish.com/readnext for a free 2-week trial. Again, that's PrepDish.com/readnext.

ANNE: Tell me more about wanting to read more backlist. What inspired that?

[00:20:02]

LIBERTY: I just realized that I just been reading strictly new releases for work for the last couple of years and there's so many great authors that you discover when you're doing that, and they have a lot of amazing backlist. I've been trying to fill in a little bit more of that and I also started a spinoff of All the Books called All the Backlist.

ANNE: Yes.

LIBERTY: Where I talk about backlist titles and so I was talking about like everything I could think of for the first 50 or 60 episodes, and then I realized like even I have only read so much backlist [LAUGHS]

ANNE: Yeah.

LIBERTY: I've given it all away already. [ANNE LAUGHS] So head start ... trying to fit in more, and like I've been trying to read a couple of things like I know people read in school, like we didn't read at our school. Things that I think I should ... Like I just read *Their Eyes Are Watching God* last year-

[00:20:42]

ANNE: Yeah.

LIBERTY: Which we didn't have to read in school and it was amazing. Or like *Passing* by Nella Larsen. Just some stuff that I think a lot of people have read that I did not.

ANNE: That's interesting. Those books were featured front and center in my library when I was there yesterday.

LIBERTY: That's fantastic.

ANNE: It's funny how sometimes all of a sudden, everyone around you is talking about the same book. Because I just saw those yesterday and those are not hot new titles that are being featured everywhere right now. And I like how that's how the book universe works sometimes.

LIBERTY: The other day I opened my book mail and I got four books that started with how, like the word how.

ANNE: What? In the mail on the same day?

LIBERTY: Yeah. And I love those kind of things. I love those weird, random book things. Or like when you read something in a book and then you either see it in the news or on TV or you get another book that's like about that or another book mentions it and it's just like [GASP] It's amazing. I call it the new car syndrome, where like you see a car and suddenly everybody has that car. [ANNE LAUGHS] Except with books instead.

ANNE: I think I'd rather play that game with books.

LIBERTY: And when I was organizing my library recently, doing an overhaul, there were a lot of books that start with how in general. It was like oh, *How To Catch A Mole*, *How To Do Nothing*, *How Not To Die Alone*, and *How Could She*. Those were the four books I got.

ANNE: Last spring, all the book covers were yellow.

LIBERTY: Yup.

ANNE: This spring, they all start with how. Interesting.

LIBERTY: And a lot of them are teal. [ANNE LAUGHS] I discovered teal's the hot spring color.

ANNE: So you mentioned going through your books, you just did a massive purge.

LIBERTY: I did. It was a really fun. I used to be afraid of getting rid of books. I used to want to keep everything that I had read, even if I didn't like it because the idea of having my own library was so exciting. But you can't realistically when you get as much book mail as I do. When you buy as many books as I do. Kinda getting rid of books is kinda fun. I know it sounds scary, but it's really fun. I had to realistically look at things and say, "Am I going to read this again?" Probably not. And the fact that I have a copy upstairs, is keeping me from reading it again because I'm being lazy, going oh, I have a copy. It's there if I want it.

[00:22:47]

ANNE: I know.

LIBERTY: I got rid of 2600 books which was about-

ANNE: Wow!

LIBERTY: A lot more than I thought. Yeah. So we moved into this house, my boyfriend was like you can have the upstairs and you can use that for your library, so I started putting up books upstairs. And then I just kept putting books upstairs and I kept being like, I'm just going to get rid of the books I read, but then that didn't happen. And so I was like, I probably have like 3000 books in the house.

And so when it was all said and done, I had about 6000 in the house. And I brought them downstairs and he's like are these all the books you own? And I was like [LAUGHS] No, these are all the books that are leaving. And he was just like, oh my goodness 'cause he doesn't go upstairs. So he was like oh, I had no idea.

ANNE: He's afraid – he's afraid Sally Mann's going to fall on his head.

LIBERTY: [LAUGHS] Yeah. The entire house is going to fall on his head. [LAUGHS] The structural integrity of my home is probably not as great as it could be or it's better now than it was I guess.

ANNE: So you got rid of 2600, which left ... did you just say you had 6000 books in your house before this started?

LIBERTY: Yeah.

ANNE: Give us an idea of how one gets rid of 2600 books. What kind of time period did you do this over?

LIBERTY: It took me over a week. Like I went through, and I said, okay, any of the books I moved in here with five years ago that I still have not read are going out. Which was like two or 300. And then it was any of the books that I have read that I'm not going to read again going out and

that was like another 1700. And then it was like, I went through and said, okay, now I'm going to look at all the books that I own that I have not read that I'm realistically not going to read. Because I get a lot of stuff in the mail like you know ... it's great, but I get a lot of stuff in the mail that is unsolicited. I would love to read it someday, but I'm just not going to get to it. So I picked all those out and I ended up with 2600.

I give books to people all the time. Family members, friends, [LAUGHS] the delivery people. The UPS lady, she's taken so many books from me. [ANNE LAUGHS] And just like the people at the post office, the people at the store across the street, but the thing is, I had to start calling in new people because my friends were like we don't read as fast as you, we still have the 15 books you gave us six months ago.

[00:24:42]

ANNE: Right.

LIBERTY: I donate them to the senior center where my boyfriend's dad works. And I give them to librarian friends who use them for summer reading programs, like to give away, and also they used them ... I didn't realize that they used them for readers advisory. They have them like pick out books, like look through the stacks and see what they could find as sort of like learning for the readers advisory.

ANNE: Yeah.

LIBERTY: Which I thought was really cool. I had not heard that and you know, I just give them to everybody. And I also find that contrary to what a lot of people believe, giving books to people who want to read and are enthusiastic, like giving them free books does not keep them from buying more books or going to the library. I think it just keeps fostering a, you know, love of reading.

ANNE: Reading begets reading.

LIBERTY: Yeah.

ANNE: Yeah, I see that too. So give us a feeling for how much space. I'm still hung up on this 2600 books idea 'cause I got rid of 300 a couple months ago and it took up a lot of space when you stack 300 books in your backroom. [LIBERTY LAUGHS] How did you get 2600 out the door? Can you give us some idea of what that looks like?

LIBERTY: Yes. I arranged them in stacks of 25 and it filled our entire sunroom. The cats were so excited. I put all the finished copies in one room and then the galleys filled almost our whole living room. 'Cause they were upstairs. I'm not going to lie. I think it would qualify as hoarding. [BOTH LAUGH]

Because we ... like upstairs ... and part of the reason I did it, most of the reason why I did it, is cause I got the kittens. And I was like they need to be able to go upstairs 'cause they bother my

other cat and she needs more space, but I was worried about stacks of books falling over on them and at that point, I just had books all across the floor. Like big stacks of books just filling the whole floor. Some kind of book labyrinth. [ANNE LAUGHS]

So that's when I made the decision-

[00:26:21]

ANNE: [LAUGHS] I'd much rather do that than the corn maze for the record.

LIBERTY: [LAUGHS] That'd be so great. So I had to do it. It's not for everybody. I have friends who read almost as much as I do and they have 20 books in their house. It's my aesthetic. [LAUGHS]

ANNE: How do you find what you're looking for? How do you organize your collection?

LIBERTY: Well that was another problem. That's another reason why I did this cull because I used to be able to find everything no matter what, and then I was having a problem. Because I like to alphabetize my titles because I find that if I can't remember a book when I'm thinking about, I'm more likely to remember the title before I remember the author.

So I like to alphabetize by title. So first I alphabetized all my books upstairs, A-Z. And then I filled the upstairs. And so I did it downstairs like through several of our rooms, I did A-Z. And then I ran out of room there, so then I was just stacking them willy-nilly in my office and then I was like three stacks deep in my office. I was like I can't find things.

But I was actually amazed because like after all that, I only found two books that I owned more than one copy of. I owned three copies of *Six of Crows*, which I don't know why and also I still haven't read it. [LAUGHS] Which really surprised me 'cause the last time I did a cull, when I moved into the house, I found that I had duplicates of like ten or 15 books.

ANNE: Yeah. What else did you have duplicates of?

LIBERTY: *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*.

ANNE: Interesting.

LIBERTY: That's it. Yeah.

ANNE: Okay.

LIBERTY: One was like the regular paperback and one was like the little cool edition that Picador did, those little tiny ones with the watercolor paintings on the front of the authors. It was kind of like necessary that I have both of them. I think, but I still can't figure out how I ended up with three copies of *Six of Crows*. [BOTH LAUGH] I'm just saying.

[00:27:54]

ANNE: Have you read it now?

LIBERTY: No, I still haven't.

ANNE: Okay. Is it on the list?

LIBERTY: It is. I have to finish the first trilogy. I still haven't read the last book in the trilogy before I start those.

ANNE: Okay.

LIBERTY: I'm a stickler for reading books in an order.

ANNE: Good to know. Also that probably incentivizes the backlist exploration.

LIBERTY: Yes. I'm one of those people who if I read an author, and I really love them, will get all of their backlist. [LAUGHS] Before I read another book of theirs.

ANNE: And go back to the beginning?

LIBERTY: Yeah. Like John Boyne. Oh my goodness, I read *The Heart's Invisible Furies*, which was just amazing and it's my favorite book of 2017. And so I went and looked at his backlist and I ended up buying like 18 novels, I think? [LAUGHS] He has a lot ... and that's not all his books. He's written a ton of nonfiction too.

ANNE: Okay, so, our producer, Brenna, was just telling me I had to read *The Terrible Thing That Happened to Barnaby Brocket*, which I have checked out from the library, but haven't read it yet. Is that one you hit on in your backlist?

LIBERTY: Nope. I have not hit it.

ANNE: Haven't worked the way forward yet. She told me it was really good.

LIBERTY: I've heard amazing things. I had not even heard of it until I went and checked all his backlist out. And then, you know, I don't look at reviews before I read books usually. If I'm interested in something, then I like to go back and look at them after. Or like after I purchase something, and that one has just incredible reviews.

ANNE: Yes, I agree. I like to do that too. What's your reason for skipping them prior to reading the book?

LIBERTY: I find at this point, if you go on Goodreads, like there are a lot of helpful reviews, but I find that people's taste varies and sometimes it's like hate ratings just make me so sad. You

know like you go on and you see ... like you can go on right now and pick a book that doesn't come out for six months and you can find some of them that have like a 2-star rating or 1-star rating because people do that.

[00:29:36]

ANNE: Didn't like the author's appearance on that podcast. 1-star.

LIBERTY: Yeah.

ANNE: Yeah. They haven't read the book yet, but yeah, I hear you.

LIBERTY: So I like to form my own opinions. But I mean, I do feel guilty with how much I read. [LAUGHS] I know I shouldn't. I should own it, but if I don't like a book, that's like you know, a few hours of my day. No big deal. Let's move on. [LAUGHS] You know like that doesn't bother me, but I find like if you don't have a lot of time to read, you want to know, is this worth my time? Which is why I like to talk about books that I enjoy, but I don't talk about books that I don't enjoy because I don't want to waste people's time, telling them what they shouldn't read because I want them to be happy and find things they enjoy.

ANNE: Right. Okay. Let's talk more about book recommendations. If recommending books is your calling, which I love putting it like that.

LIBERTY: I call myself the court suggestor.

ANNE: [LAUGHS] Oh, you were born in the wrong era. [LIBERTY LAUGHS] When somebody asks for your help recommending a book, whether it's online or back when you worked in the bookstore, what are you listening for in order to glean what they enjoy and what they may enjoy reading next?

LIBERTY: The first thing I ask them is tell me your three favorite books. [ANNE LAUGHS] And then tell me a book – tell me a book that you read recently that you loved and tell me a book that you read recently that you didn't love. And I usually get a pretty good idea from that. And you can also like hear a lot of what they're not saying by what they choose.

ANNE: What does that sound like?

LIBERTY: Like if they're just picking mysteries, then you know you don't want to suggest like a romance novel. Or if they're just picking romance novels, like you should probably pick something in that genre. As opposed to like, here, read this science book. But there's also like little things that cross over all the time, so it's sometimes fun to be like, do you want to try a new genre? Cause there's this book I think you would really love because you love birds, and this is about someone who stole feathers. It's fun.

[00:31:26]

ANNE: You described yourself as a huge data nerd. Do you think that helps you recommend books to your fellow readers?

LIBERTY: I do. You know, I spend so much time already telling you how my memory is not as great as it used to be, but it's still really good and I'm able to like file things away and remember books like from so long ago. I think that's very beneficial, being able to recall that you know right away. I think it definitely helps. Plus I like to go ... I like to keep spreadsheets and I'd go through and look at them to like refresh my memory and be like what am I going to talk about today on All the Backlist? You know and just get all these titles in my head and oh, there was that and that's right, and I read this. It's so much fun and then I can remember it like next time, like I want to read a book about raccoons that like to parachute out of planes. I'm like oh, I have just the one for you. [ANNE LAUGHS] Just reminded of it the other day.

ANNE: I want to read the book about raccoons parachuting out of planes.

LIBERTY: You can write that book.

ANNE: I could write that book, but then there would be other books I wouldn't get to write. All right, I'm going to think about that book, Liberty. We'll see.

LIBERTY: Okay.

ANNE: I may have to dedicate it to you in 2027 when I finish it. [LIBERTY LAUGHS]

Readers, did you know most brands recommend you trade in your old bra every 6 months? I can assure you I have pushed that number in the past, to my own detriment, but with ThirdLove we have no excuses. That's because their online Fit Finder quiz eliminates the trip to the store and those awkward fitting room experiences. In just 60 seconds ThirdLove helps you identify your size and shape, then shows you styles that fit your body. And stylists say when you get your foundation garments right, everything you put on your body just looks better.

ThirdLove is going to be the most comfortable bra you've worn—not only because you chose the right fit, but also because they use ultra-soft smoothing fabrics and lightweight super thin memory foam cups. All those details really do make these the most comfortable. In fact, I've been wearing ThirdLove for over a year now and just ordered more, 1 as a replacement and 1 that's a new-to-me style. I might feel kind of weird telling you this, except that on book tour readers frequently thanked me in person for introducing them to ThirdLove, so clearly we're all friends here and can talk about this stuff.

But there's no need to take my word for it because ThirdLove offers a 100% Fit Guarantee and if you don't love it for any reason you can return or exchange it for free for any reason at all.

ThirdLove knows there's a perfect bra for everyone, so right now they are offering What Should I Read Next listeners 15% off your first order! Go to [THIRDLOVE.com/READNEXT](https://www.thirdlove.com/READNEXT) now to find your perfect-fitting bra... and get 15% off your first purchase!

That's [THIRDLOVE.com/READNEXT](https://www.thirdlove.com/READNEXT) for 15% off today!

Readers, now that spring is here, I'm spending more time outside. I'm walking the dog farther, doing a little bit of gardening, even running occasionally. And while it's not yet pool or beach season I am already searching for my sunscreen because when I don't I can feel my skin drying out ... even if it doesn't look like I got too much sun exposure. But I know that while the sun does my soul good, the same is not true for my skin.

You can't hide from the sun, but Hers is here to help you deal with aging skin. Hers is the new women's wellness brand cutting the cost and hassles of dermatology by delivering one of dermatologists' go-to solutions for aging skin.

Hers provides access to licensed doctors online. No more in-person dermatologist's visits, no more pharmacy lines, and no insurance needed.

Everyone's skin is different so the doctor will evaluate you and then, if appropriate, can help tailor a treatment just for you, and then have it delivered straight to your door.

This isn't about us needing to change something about our face, or changing your sunscreen habits. It's about finally receiving products that make us look our best, now.

If it's not prescription skincare, you may as well just apply marketing to your face.

What Should I Read Next listeners can get their first month of anti-aging formula from Hers for \$10 off right now while supplies last, (and subject to doctor approval).

Go to [ForHers.com/READNEXT](https://www.fors.com/READNEXT). That's F-O-R-H-E-R-S dot com slash READNEXT. [ForHers.com/READNEXT](https://www.fors.com/READNEXT). Restrictions apply, see website for full details.

ANNE: So speaking of drawing threads between books, we thought it might be fun to play a game of questions but with books because everything is better with books.

[00:35:50]

LIBERTY: Everything is better with books.

ANNE: It is. Have you read *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*?

[00:35:53]

LIBERTY: I have not.

ANNE: Oh, really? Well [LIBERTY LAUGHS] *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is one of those ... I think it's actually a play. I had to read it in high school English, and it started with the class going this is dumb, and it ended with I think most of the class going this is amazing. So

partly interesting concept. Partly a good teacher. I mean, you know. I'm thanking my lucky stars for all the good English teachers I had through the years. Not uniformly so, but many of them because [LIBERTY LAUGHS] when the grownups in your life are excited about reading, you are excited about reading and you never think it's boring.

But Stoppard turns *Hamlet* inside out and he tells this story from the perspective of these two minor characters, who are barely mentioned by name in the story. They're a little thick and don't always understand what's going on, but there's this one exchange in the book, and I highly encourage you to look it up on YouTube. We'll put a link in show notes to the clip here. Where they play this game called Questions? The idea is ... they compare it to tennis. And they're volleying questions back and forth to each other. You can only answer the question with a question and it's really funny. You're going to have to take my word for it. [LIBERTY LAUGHS] Or go look it up on YouTube when we're done talking. It's just two minutes and it's really fun.

But I thought it would be fun for us to do that same thing with books. Perhaps to play a mental association game where we can volley book recommendations back and forth instead of questions a la Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

LIBERTY: Okay.

ANNE: I'm going to start. I'll share a book I read and loved recently, and I'd love you to pick a book that it reminds you of, tell me about it, and send it back my way. And we'll go from there.

LIBERTY: Okay.

ANNE: Okay. I'm going to start with a recent read. *The Last Romantics* by Tara Conklin. [LIBERTY GASPS] I haven't read her first book, *The House Girl*, but I love an intricate, messy family story about a family that's kinda messed up, but is going to work through it together that ends on an ultimate upbeat of hope. How about you?

LIBERTY: It's one of my favorites of this year.

ANNE: Oh, I'm so glad to hear it.

LIBERTY: I also read it without knowing anything about it. It was one of those ones. This is where the expiration comes in handy [ANNE LAUGHS] when it's going to expire off of my laptop. And I hadn't read it and I was like, okay, I've heard good things. Like not good things, but like I heard people say that they read this book and loved it so, I read it and it just blew me away. Like the whole thing with her being 102 at the start of the book and narrating it and being a poet and this is the story where it came from. I just loved that book so, so, so much. And it reminded me a little bit of another book that came out this year that I really enjoyed, *The Care And Feeding of Ravenous Hungry Girls* by Anissa Gray, which is another one about siblings. Some terrible things that happen when they are young and how that affects them when they are older.

But it also looks at parents who are incarcerated, which is something you don't often see in novels. Like what it's like for the families when a member of the family does something like how it affects other people in the family who have nothing to do with it. And also how it affects the children when their parents are incarcerated.

I thought it was really, really wonderful.

[00:38:55]

ANNE: Yes. I am actually listening to *The Care And Feeding of Ravenously Hungry Girls*. That is a long title and I like it. Right now. I've been working on it slowly for about a month 'cause it's one of those books that you're not always ready to like go to that place 'cause it's heavy, but I'm enjoying it. I did find that incarceration theme really interesting. It makes me think of *An American Marriage*, obviously, but it also makes me think of this book I'm reading right now. It's *The Words Between Us* by Erin Bartels. And just last night, while I was reading the galley in bed, the author had to travel across many states to go visit her mother who's been incarcerated for reasons that aren't entirely clear because it looks like it might've been a framed job.

But tonight I'm going to finish and I'm going to find out what really happened. So that's *The Words Between Us* by Erin Bartels.

LIBERTY: That's a novel, though. That's not true. No, it's a novel.

ANNE: No, it's a novel.

LIBERTY: I was like is that a true story? That would be-

ANNE: Maybe it's based on something true. In the novel, this poor, young 15-year-old narrator, the fear is that her parents may have sold arms to 9/11 perpetrators.

LIBERTY: Oh.

ANNE: So her parents are public enemies, like way up the list. And she gets to live with that.

LIBERTY: Can I dig way back and go dark?

ANNE: Yes.

[00:40:11]

LIBERTY: Because I had reason to mention this to someone recently and it's like still in the front of my head. It's a memoir. I think it's 25 years old now, but I still think about it often. It's called *Shot In The Heart* by Mikal Gilmore. It's about his brother who was Gary Gilmore. In the late '70s, he was a criminal. He killed some people. It was a very famous case. And he was arrested, and he petitioned to be sentenced to death.

The Executioner's Song by Norman Mailer was written about his case.

ANNE: Yeah.

LIBERTY: This is Mikal's story. Gary was much older than him and Mikal just talks about like what their family was like growing up, how his father was very hard, and Gary isn't getting any excuses for him because what he did was horrible. It's a really interesting viewpoint of a survivor of this kind of thing. And the writing is just incredible and when Elizabeth McCracken, who is my favorite author, when I first started following her on Twitter, she mentioned it and I was like [GASPS] there's one other person in the world who has read this book and I was so happy.

You know, it's very sad, but it's really also enlightening, and the writing is incredible. It's called *Shot In The Heart* by Mikal Gilmore. But it's Mikal, M-I-K-A-L. I don't know if he still writes for Rolling Stone, but he did write for Rolling Stone for a really long time.

ANNE: That sounds fascinating. And what it makes me think of is a book in a different genre that's still really relevant and that is *The Body Keeps The Score* by Bessel van der Kolk. Because what he writes about is how trauma of any kind deeply impacts the way that we live and think and move through the world and interact with others and how until we untangle the trauma that we've experienced in our own lives, we will remain stuck in that trauma. And it's fascinating the way he talks about what he's discovered about uncovering and treating people who have dealt with unimaginable things is sometimes so kooky that I had to read it out loud to my husband to say, listen to this. This really works. But mostly just a really, really insightful. So psychology nonfiction, *The Body Keeps the Score*.

LIBERTY: And that one makes me think of *The Deepest Well* by Nadine Burke Harris, which I read last year. I think it came out last year. Healing the long-term effects of childhood adversity and it was incredibly fascinating, about how trauma in children physically changes your body. Physically changes your brain, your makeup. You know like there was one child who ... it's also terribly, terribly sad. You know, there was one child who stopped growing because of trauma and it just made me think of you know, every day like how important it is to treat children well and to watch what you say to children and to protect them because then they grow up to be adults with all this trauma. [LAUGHS] It's so, so, so sad. You know, these terrible things happen and then we expect people to be functional adults. And this kind of looks at like how it physically changes people.

[00:43:03]

ANNE: Right because you carry the trauma in your body. Okay. I'm going to take a hard pivot to talk about kids. Kids experiencing hard things, but hard on a I'm-12-and-I-don't-like-the-way-my-life-is-right-now. Not deeply traumatic.

LIBERTY: Okay.

ANNE: And that is my favorite middle grade novel of the year so far. It's true, I don't read a ton, but it's still my favorite and that is *To Night Owl From Dogfish*. I've been excited to read this since I first found out that Holly Goldberg Sloan and Meg Wolitzer were writing a book

together. This is about two young girls whose dads fall in love with each other at [LAUGHS] oh, it's some kind of trade show in Chicago for maybe the building industry. That's not the point, but the details are kind of fun.

So one of them is in California. One of them is in Texas. They catch wind of the fact that their dads are sending them to summer camp together so they'll hit it off because they're maybe going to become a family. And the girls are having none of it, so they start writing emails to each other. Look, I don't like you, and I never will. But this is what you should know: We need to break this plan up. So it's like the parent trap, but contemporary version, and it goes in directions I don't expect. Fun and funny and warmhearted.

LIBERTY: So that reminds me of *Listen, Slowly* by Thanhha Lai, I think is how you pronounce her name. It's my favorite middle grade novel of 2015. It's about a young girl named Mai. She lives in California. She's ten. She is all about the summer, which is coming. School vacation. She's going to surf and she's going to hang out with her friends at the beach and she's got a crush on this boy that she really likes and instead her parents tell her that she's going to accompany her grandmother to Vietnam because her grandmother has a chance to find out what actually happened to her husband during the Vietnam war. Her parents came over at the end of the Vietnam war and Mai has never been there before and this is a total bummer for her.

Lai just writes the best, like exasperated ten-year-old voice through the whole. Just like being "Ugh, this is a drag and I can't believe I have to do this." And then like slowly being like, this country is amazing and what my grandmother went through was so hard and I don't want to leave here like I love everyone here and everything about it. And she won a national book award for *Inside Out And Back Again* which is also an incredible book, but this one is my favorite.

ANNE: That sounds really interesting and it's not one I've read. It reminds me of a Vietnam novel I have read called *Going After Cacciato* by Tim O'Brien. A novel not about the Vietnam experience you're describing in *Listen, Slowly*, but an all together different experience of the country and that is through the eyes of a soldier in the Vietnam War.

But this book, best way I can describe it, is that it plays off *Alice in Wonderland*. There's a chapter in the book where the characters escape the maze of tunnels that they are trapped in by falling out the same way they fell in. That's your big tip off that oh, something strange is afoot here. I think it's fascinating because it's a novel about the Vietnam War that is playing with *Alice in Wonderland*. And I really enjoy interesting juxtaposition like that.

[00:46:00]

LIBERTY: A related Tim O'Brien note, which I just heard about, he's writing for *This is Us*, the television show, which I've not seen but I understand has parts to do with the Vietnam war.

ANNE: I've only seen the first season. I did not know Tim O'Brien was involved in any capacity. That is fascinating.

LIBERTY: Yeah, it's amazing. My favorite novel about the Vietnam War is *Matterhorn* by Karl Marlantes.

ANNE: Ooh.

LIBERTY: He spent 30 years writing this novel. He himself was in the Vietnam War. It's based on some of his experiences. It's about how you know, the higher ups in the military, you know, made the soldiers do all the dangerous stuff that they didn't want to do. They did stuff that they, you know, told them wouldn't work, they made them do it anyway. You know how there was racism in the camps, like the soldiers, they would, you know, all bunk together and they wouldn't get along. People were just being awful to each other you know on the same side. It's like 600 pages long and I could've read like another 600 pages of it. It is so fascinating and just absolutely heartbreaking.

And you can tell, like the detail is so amazing that he was there himself. He has a book coming out in a few months called *Deep River*, which I'm really excited to read. Which should not take him 30 years to write. So that's one of the ones that I've been like holding off on 'cause I'm so excited about it. But this was just absolutely beautiful. If you enjoy reading military history, it's just incredible.

ANNE: I haven't read *Matterhorn*, but I'm so intrigued by the way you describe it and also the idea of spending 30 years writing a novel. Wow. And it reminds me of my favorite war novel of the past few months 'cause there are a lot these days. Are there not?

LIBERTY: Yes.

ANNE: And that is the World War II historical novel *The Huntress* by Kate Quinn. Which we could also talk about *The Body Keeps the Score* there also. But in her acknowledgements, she thanks her ... I guess her editor. Kate Quinn says, thank you for the extra month you gave me to finish the novel. This thing is 560 pages [LIBERTY LAUGHS] I don't know how long it took her, not 30 years, but probably more than one.

This is a World War II historical novel. It's told from multiple perspectives. I listened to it on audio. it sucked me right in. What happens here is there is a Nazi war criminal. It's a woman. She is the huntress, which I was a German minor in school, so it was kind of fun to be able to understand still after all these years, some of the German. So she was dejaeggering to the Nazis and I really loved ... well I love in any historical novel, any author's notes that give you insight into the author's process, who they based their characters on, what was true and what was imagined. But she mashed up two real women from Nazi Germany to create her character the huntress.

The huntress has vanished. So there is a journalist looking for her. Oh, and she's obviously a highly wanted war criminal because she was responsible for the deaths of many allies in a very cold, cruel way. There's a journalist whose brother was one of the last people she killed, and he's determined to avenge his brother's death. Then there's a female fighter pilot who is the

only woman alive who they are certain can actually recognize the huntress when she sees her. No one else can recognize her.

So these two characters are on the hunt together to find this war criminal. And I love the way this story is told from different viewpoints in time. You go before the war, during the war, and after the war from multiple perspectives. And sometimes in a novel like this, you like skim one perspective 'cause to get back to the good stuff, the storyline you really care about. All these perspectives really worked. I just love the characters. It was such a great story. It was really well told. It was complex, but Kate Quinn nailed it. She's the author of *The Alice Network*, which I really loved a few years back. And I thought, what is she going to do next? It's even better. It's so good.

[00:49:38]

LIBERTY: My favorite nonfiction book about World War II ... I mean I have several. I like to read military history, but one that I find a lot of people can engage with is *Agent Zigzag: A True Story of Nazi Espionage, Love, and Betrayal* by Ben Macintyre. He's written several books, like *Sex on the Moon*, and I think this was his first nonfiction book. I think he used to write X-Files tie-ins.

ANNE: Oh, I didn't know that.

LIBERTY: Yeah, I think - I think that's him. Forget what you're reading 'cause this is like the keystone cops. It's not possible, but it's the true story of this criminal. He was a conman. His name was Eddie Chapman and he was British, and he got stuck when the Nazis invaded ... they said to him, you know, you're in big trouble, and he said, "You know what. I'm going to go back to Britain and I'm going to spy for you." Because he was a conman and he was also very charming, and he could talk his way out of anything.

And so they said, "Okay." And so they sent him back to Britain and he went to the government there and said, "The Nazis think I'm spying for them, I will spy for you." It was like all this double agent craziness. You're reading this book and you're like, this didn't really happen. This is something out of like get smart. Some of the most ridiculous things that they fell for. Pretending that buildings that been blown up by doctoring photos and stuff like that and also just like this guy who's just ... he's just so ridiculous and swarmy and just gross and you're like, is he going to follow through with what he's doing? You know, is he going to just forget everything or screw them over like he's done everyone else in his life?

It's so, so interesting.

[00:51:10]

ANNE: I don't know that book, but I did read and love *A Spy Among Friends* by Macintyre and yes, the truth is stranger than fiction. All right, Liberty, I'm going to call an end to our Rosencrantz and Guildenstern weird literary adventure. Thank you for experimenting with me on that one.

LIBERTY: You're welcome, it was fun.

ANNE: How would you feel about recommending a book for me before we sign off?

LIBERTY: Sure. I would love to. What - what's something you're interested in reading? Is there a genre that you haven't explored that you've always wanted to read? Is there an author with an extensive backlist, like where you should start?

ANNE: Well I've never read Elizabeth McCracken, so let's start there. [LIBERTY GASPS] Tell me which one I should start with.

LIBERTY: *The Giant's House*. For sure.

ANNE: I don't know that one.

LIBERTY: It's like the most perfect of all her novels. I think it's the most perfect of all novels really that I've read. But it gives you a really good sense of her beautiful writing. It gives you a really good sense of her uniqueness. I don't want to say quirky. That's not a great word for it, but she's just ... everything has a subtle little shift to less than normal in her books and she's so incredibly ... you read a sentence and you're like I have to read that 15 more times.

The Giant's House is about a librarian in New England and there is a boy who comes to the library and he can't stop growing. And they form this friendship over the years as he continues to grow and he's like 7 feet tall and he just keeps – keeps growing. And it's about loneliness and it's about forming a bond with somebody. It's so, so beautiful. She's just amazing. I mean, I've had a chance to meet her a couple of times and both times I just make a fool of myself. [ANNE LAUGHS] I make a fool of myself in front of all authors all the time, but definitely in front of Elizabeth McCracken. [LAUGHS]

ANNE: That's not how I expected the plot summary to go. [LIBERTY LAUGHS] I know the new Peter Heller is waiting for me at the library. [LIBERTY GASPS] Thoughts?

[00:52:54]

LIBERTY: Yes. Everything he writes is wonderful. [ANNE LAUGHS] I feel like *The Dog Stars* came out and everyone like *The Road* had just come out a couple years earlier. Everyone is super into apocalyptic novels, *The Dog Stars* did really well and then I feel like no one really paid attention to the fact that he wrote more books after that. Not no one, but like a lot of people. So like yeah, *The Dog Stars*, but I mean, he had *The Painter*, which came out after that which was phenomenal. And then *Celine*, last year, so, so, so good. I remember the year before. Based on his mother, and then *The River*, which first of all, I can't stop staring at the cover. The pattern, like with the paddle, just transfixing. Maybe that's how they get you to read the book. It's like you are now under our spell. [ANNE LAUGHS]

I keep going back to that cover. I just love it. Definitely worth picking up. All of his stuff is worth it.

ANNE: And finally, how about something fun for summer?

LIBERTY: Something fun for summer. There are so many, many things. I just read a fantastic graphic novel, or I guess I should say, it's a web comic that was collected.

ANNE: That's a genre that I don't read much of at all. So that's a good place to go.

LIBERTY: This one was not what I was expecting it at all. I did not know anything about it except that a bunch of my Book Riot coworkers were telling me that I absolutely needed to read this. And so I picked it up and they are right. It's called *Check Please* and this book #1 and it's by Ngozi Ukazu. It's about this kid, he's a junior figure skater champion from Georgia, and he goes to this imaginary college called Samwell University. It's not imaginary in the book, like he's not making it up. It's just not a real place. It's in Rhode Island I believe. He joins the hockey team and it's not what you think is going to happen. There is none of the visual in-fighting or gross jokes, sexist, you know, beer swelling, you know, hockey players. [ANNE LAUGHS] It's all about community and he likes to bake. He makes pies and he's making video blogs. He's a vlogger. Like talking about his experience on the hockey team and like the interactions he had and like all the friendships he makes. And it's so sweet and it's romantic. Like he falls in love with a teammate. I could not get enough of it.

ANNE: I don't know that one. And I don't think a graphic novel about hockey would have called my name if I saw it anywhere, so thank you so much.

LIBERTY: [LAUGHS] You're welcome.

ANNE: What are you looking forward to reading this summer that you haven't read this yet?

LIBERTY: I really, really want *The Memory Police* by Yōko Ogawa. So if anyone from Echo Books is listening, please send it to me. [LAUGHS] She wrote *The Housekeeper and The Professor*.

[00:55:23]

ANNE: I haven't read that.

LIBERTY: Totally different. She wrote a book about scary stories called *Revenge*, which were all about revenge and really seriously strange things happening. This one is sorta like a sci-fi thriller from what I understand, so I'm really, really, really excited about that. I really want to read the Ta-Nehisi Coates novel, which the name of is escaping me. I don't even know ... do we know it yet? I just read that it's happening, so that's exciting.

ANNE: Liberty, when we hang up here today, what's the next thing you're going to be reading?

LIBERTY: I am going to be picking up ... I have to look over my shoulder at what I have coming up next. I'm going to be picking up *The Affairs of Falcons* by Melissa Rivero because that is coming out next week and I need to check it out.

ANNE: I listened to half of that on audio recently.

LIBERTY: Excellent. I have to say I've never listened to an audiobook. People tell me they're amazing. [LAUGHS]

ANNE: They don't go nearly as fast as staring at your giant computer screen.

LIBERTY: Yeah. Like if I had a commute, I'm sure that I would be all about them. Or actually people would probably want me to pay attention to the road because I'm very aggressive. [ANNE LAUGHS] Maybe not.

ANNE: They would. It's true.

LIBERTY: I'm 100% on board for other people listening to them. [LAUGHS]

ANNE: Well I am going to finish the Erin Bartels book. Find out why this mom is in jail and if she really deserves to be, and then I'm starting in on *Natalie Tan's Book of Luck and Fortune* by Roselle Lim.

LIBERTY: Yeah, I have that on my shelf too. I'm looking forward to that as well.

ANNE: The cover is so stinking adorable.

LIBERTY: It really, really is.

ANNE: I don't know if it's mesmerizing like the Peter Heller, *The River*, but it's adorable [LIBERTY LAUGHS] with all the San Francisco and the swirly. It looks like a genie has been unleashed from a bottle. [LIBERTY LAUGHS] Liberty, it's been a pleasure. Thank you so much for talking books with me today.

[00:56:53]

LIBERTY: Thank you so much for inviting me. This has been so much fun.

[CHEERFUL OUTRO MUSIC]

ANNE: Hey readers, I hope you enjoyed my discussion with Liberty, and I would love to hear what YOU think Liberty should read next. That page is at whatshouldireadnextpodcast.com/180 (that's 1-8-0) and it's where you'll find the full list of titles we talked about today.

Liberty is a must-follow on Instagram, her handle is @franzencomesalive. F-R-A-Z-E-N Frazencomesalive. You can find her on twitter @MissLiberty, and you can get more book recommendations from her by listening to her All the Books podcast from Book Riot.

Readers, I'll see you next week! In the meantime, catch this week's episode of my new podcast One Great Book coming this Friday. This is my new, short-form podcast where I pull one standout selection off my personal bookshelves and tell you all about it, in ten minutes or less.

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Thanks to the people who make this show happen! What Should I Read Next is produced by Brenna Frederick, with sound design by Kellen Pechacek. Readers, that's it for this episode. Thanks so much for listening. And as Rainer Maria Rilke said, "ah, how good it is to be among people who are reading." Happy reading, everyone.