



WSIRN Episode 204: Nonfiction that reads like a thrilling novel
Hosted by Anne Bogel, with guest David Krohse

[00:00:00]

DAVID: If I had to describe Erik Larson's writing style, I would say it's like he plops words on the page. I mean, it just... [BOTH LAUGH]

[CHEERFUL INTRO MUSIC]

ANNE: Hey readers. I'm Anne Bogel, and this is What Should I Read Next? Episode 204.

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, first off, I'd like to thank you all for helping us celebrate our 200th episode a couple of weeks ago. I know many of you shared the show with your friends and family and we've seen lots of new listeners, so thank you. And as a reminder for all you long-time listeners, if you're a completist who just can't start something without completing the whole series we have something just for you. We created a 200-club badge to share on instagram for when you've listened to the first 200 episodes. You can find that on our instagram feed @ [whatshouldireadnext](#). Feel free to grab that image and share it!

For all you new listeners, welcome aboard. The show can be listened to in any order backwards or forwards—although our producer Brenna assures readers that backwards really is best— but if you find the idea of bingeing 200 episodes daunting we've made a Spotify playlist of my 30 favorite episodes so that you have an easy place to start. You can find that at [whatshouldireadnextpodcast.com/spotify](#).

Today I'm talking books with David Krohse, an Iowa reader who's woven a love of literature into all aspects of his life — the waiting room of his chiropractic practice, the bar with a group

friends, and quality time spent with his wife. David loves larger than life NONfiction, especially if it reads like an intense thriller, so today I'm hooking him up with exactly that.

Let's get to it!

David, welcome to the show.

[00:01:56]

DAVID: Hey there.

ANNE: Well thank you so much for joining us this morning from Iowa, isn't it?

DAVID: That's correct, yes, Iowa. I'm a chiropractor and just want to say a special thanks to you. You actually accompany my wife and I on a date night almost every week. [LAUGHS] Every Friday, we have this routine where we go for about a six mile walk with our dog and a while back we learned about your podcast, but we usually chat for the first couple miles, and then we listen to a true crime podcast. And then after that, we need something a little bit more positive so to speak and so, you come after that.

ANNE: [LAUGHS] True crime and What Should I Read Next.

DAVID: Yeah. You and Dirty John and Doctor Death, it's great company, so. [ANNE LAUGHS] It's a little bit weird but it works for us.

ANNE: Well I like it. Now I have questions about the logistics of listening to a podcast with somebody else on a walk. How do you all actually do this with your technology?

DAVID: We have a little bluetooth speaker, and then the walk that we do, there's not a lot of people. But in general, if people are out there enjoying nature, I'll pause at any time that we're coming close to somebody.

ANNE: So you're listening on the speaker, okay. What I'm thinking of now is my town. A couple times a year, we have this psych-loova thing for Louisville where they close the streets. It's modeled after the city in Argentina that started it. And there's always these guys that show up with this giant boom box, so they ride up and down the two mile stretch that's closed all Sunday afternoon when they do it and they're blasting '80s music. But you and your wife are blasting What Should I Read Next through the trail. I know you're not going to say blasting, but I'm really liking this visual.

DAVID: Yes, well we keep it pretty quiet.

ANNE: Does the dog like What Should I Read Next?

[00:03:30]

DAVID: Mmm, we actually let her off-leash, so she's out looking for deer.

ANNE: She's more of a Dirty John fan.

DAVID: [LAUGHS] Yeah. For sure.

ANNE: We were so interested to get your application because it sounds like you're a reader who has brought your love of reading into your day job in a way that we found really interesting. Also my husband had recently read one of your favorites, and he's like oh yeah, I gotta hear what David thought about that book.

DAVID: Nice.

ANNE: What lead you to send in your submission, David?

DAVID: For a period of time, my wife would really egg me on as a reader, oh, what are you reading now? And if I wasn't reading something, she'd kinda harass me about it quite frankly. [ANNE LAUGHS] But within my office, you know, I do have conversations with people. I just want to know what they're into, so if I got somebody that's a reader, you know, I'd be asking them, what exactly they're into. Just super fun conversations. There are people in chiropractic that come in about once a month, and so I get to ask, hey what are you reading in your book club currently? And do you like it? And so getting recommendations in my offices is just really fun.

And years ago, probably back in 2010, came up with this idea of putting a clipboard up in our reception area and we ask people to write down the book that they're most thankful for. I got to say just wording the question that way, it made for like the coolest list. I mean, if we had just said what's your favorite book, you'd get one list, but when you say, what book are you most thankful for? We just got the most amazing list of books because it opened up things like *Five Love Languages*. It was amazing. And the coolest thing was that you know, we get some teenagers in our office. Sometimes they come in, they're a little bit sullen and quiet, but even the kids, even pre-teens, we'd ask them to write down the book that they're most thankful for, and instantly, they would write one down, so it was super fun.

ANNE: So something I love about talking about books and reading is that it's a shortcut to talking about the stuff that really matters, that's really fascinating in life, and yet I'm thinking of all the times I went to the chiropractor as a teenager after a car wreck. Not a big deal car wreck, but still, you know, you're a little messed up in the neck and shoulders if you get rear ended. I just remember all these conversations about the weather and allergies. We always have allergies to talk about in Louisville, and I would have been so delighted if somebody had asked me about what I was reading in book club instead.

[00:05:33]

DAVID: You know, a lot of the books I would actually go and read them. Probably the most powerful one, this guy came in, he was a financial advisor. And if you ever met a guy that just seemed like he had the world in the palm of his hands. I mean, this guy had a successful business. He seemed to have, like, picture-perfect family and then his hobby, he was like a pilot for skydivers. So he would, like, take these skydivers up and-

ANNE: What.

DAVID: Let them jump out of his plane, and so he came in and he had written something down on our list up front, and as he came back, I said, you know, what book did you write down? And he told me that he had written down this *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living* by Dale Carnegie. Have you read that?

ANNE: I have. I actually just read that recently because my book coming out in March is called *Don't Overthink It*, and someone suggested that I read this to see how the concerns between 1948 and 2019, thinking too much about the wrong things and not doing ourselves any good in the process. They weren't that different in 1948. I mean, a lot has changed obviously, but a lot of the concerns that my friends and I talk about today appear in the pages of that book.

DAVID: Exactly. Well I want to ask you, like, what book would you say you're most thankful for? Or two books?

ANNE: Ooh. That's a big question, David. [DAVID LAUGHS] And you're right, it's a different question than what's a book you love or what's your favorite book. Do you have an answer to that?

DAVID: Oh, yeah, I end up saying the *Five Love Languages* every year just because my wife and I are so different [LAUGHS] and like, I'm a quality time person and she's a gift giver. And the majority of our fights through our relationship together, it's like there were just these differences in our love languages where you know, interestingly, I need more quality time than she does, and she would say, ahh, you're needy, and I'm like, you know, that's how I receive love.

ANNE: Yeah, I think a book like that that can really open your eyes to how you're interacting in many of your relationships can be so valuable. I mean, it's a book that changes your life and your relationships. Well, I can tell you at the moment I just returned from a bookseller's conference and I got a copy of a new book that I have been desperate to read since I first found out it was being written, and that is the new Emily St. John Mandel. This is not the book I'm most thankful for in my life, but it is definitely the book I'm most thankful for right now.

DAVID: [LAUGHS] Okay. Nice.

[00:07:43]

ANNE: Probably not what you had in mind when you put out that clipboard, but I've been waiting a long time and I was ready to kiss the bookseller who put it into my hands. [DAVID LAUGHS] I was like, you don't by chance have one of those for me, do you? And she crawled under the table and pulled out a copy and [SIGHS] Jessica at Penguin Random is my new best friend.

DAVID: [LAUGHS] Nice. I love it. No, people definitely write the book that they've read most recently that really-really moved them or that they're excited about.

ANNE: Do you compile the books on that clipboard. Do you leave them out so that all your patients can see? What do you do with that information?

DAVID: Yes, it goes in our email newsletter.

ANNE: Oh, good. I wonder if your patients ever strike up conversations in the waiting room about what they wrote on the clipboard or read.

DAVID: Yeah, a lot of that.

ANNE: Now tell me a little bit about your book club with a twist that you started this yourself, right? You're not solely a participant?

DAVID: That's correct. Like I said for a long time, my wife was the one that pushed me to read more, but really there are people that I would just connect with talking about books and what I really realized was that these people, they're quite different in what they're focused in. Some are athletes. I have a lot of athletes as patients. Entrepreneurs. Anybody that's an entrepreneur, I get really excited to learn what they're doing and what books they're reading. Anybody that's in leadership. You know, I'm always interested in what they recommend or what their favorite book is. Just goal oriented people in general.

And so I wanted to start a book club, but I wanted it to kinda attract people that are goal oriented people and so I ended up calling this-this group the Inspired Book and Brew Crew. Basic criteria is the book needs to be inspiring at some level. Could be fiction, nonfiction, biography, you know, an actual improve your life type book, but then, in our meetings we actually just focus on how the books can, like, help us reach goals or how it applies in our life.

So I haven't actually been to a book club other than mine, so I don't know how a typical book club runs, but it feels a little bit different. The other thing that we did, we added this portion of the meeting for setting what are called penalty goals. Are you familiar with that concept?

ANNE: We're not talking about hockey, are we?

DAVID: [LAUGHS] No.

[00:09:41]

ANNE: Is this where if you fail to show up for your morning workouts, your friend sends the check to the organization you despise in your name?

DAVID: Yeah. That is the concept. I mean, if you look at most people's life, we only have true accountability in our full-time jobs where somebody is like giving us a deadline and telling us what to do, but if you look at somebody like me, I mean, I don't - I own my business and so if I don't get the job done, there's no penalty.

At the end of our monthly meetings, each people if they choose can set a goal of something that they're going to accomplish and that they can actually measure and then they set a penalty that if they don't get it done, then they have to do the penalty. The first meeting, this young lady came in and she works at an interior design company, but she was starting a side business. And she said that she would set up her website for her business and if she didn't get it done, then she'd have to pay \$100 to her sister-in-law that she's not a really big fan of.

ANNE: Oh, no!

DAVID: [LAUGHS] I know. And the most common one since we do meet actually at a breweries, people just say, if I don't get my goal done, then I'd just have to buy the next round at the next meeting. But it's been a lot of fun.

ANNE: What kinds of goals are people setting?

DAVID: Some of them are athletic. I mean, there's a guy that set a goal to ride a 1000 miles in a month. There's a lady who is a pharmacist, but she's actually more interested in getting into natural health, and so she'll set goals related to setting up her website or truly like locking down this vision of, like, this future business. Along with my chiropractic business, I'm starting an online course business, so I'll set goals related to getting my side hustle going. There's a young lady that wants to become a yoga instructor, and so I know she set a goal of like going to like four different yoga studios and just trying these different gurus and seeing which one she resonates with.

ANNE: So the goals aren't necessarily reading-related.

DAVID: No, I don't think we've had anybody set a reading-related goal. It's all just ... Whatever's important to them. Whatever they want to do, but a deadline is going to help them accomplish it. I mean, you really get to know what people are interested in and we also had one lady that's a very driven type of person and her goal was to like meditate or to journal. The people that come to the group, [ANNE LAUGHS] sometimes they need to slow down and relax and reflect more. You learn a lot about who's in the room when they're sharing that kind of thing.

[00:11:47]

ANNE: What have you all read with this book club?

DAVID: We started actually with *Shawshank Redemption* by Stephen King, which is one of my favorite books and favorite movie, and I know you're not a huge Stephen King fan, but-

ANNE: No, but I've been meaning to read that one.

DAVID: I would tell you *Dolores Claiborne* is probably the best audiobook I've ever. It's just incredible. It's one where my wife and I like sat in the car for like 30 minutes.

ANNE: Wow.

DAVID: And it doesn't have any supernatural and it's not a true horror story. But we read *Shawshank Redemption*. We read *Chop Wood Carry Water*. We read *The Power of One*, *Can't Hurt Me*, and then tonight we're going to be talking about *The Ideal Team Player*.

ANNE: Nice. So it's not just business nonfiction.

DAVID: No.

ANNE: At all.

DAVID: No, no. That would be kinda boring I think. [ANNE LAUGHS] So no, I mean, some of them have been kinda short. I mean, that *Chop Wood Carry Water* is a shorter, parable style book, but have you ever read *The Power of One*?

ANNE: I have. Just in the past, I think, five years after being told for ages to read it from readers who say oh my gosh. This is my favorite book ever. I really enjoyed it and was glad that I finally got around to it. But oh man, there are some very difficult parts.

DAVID: No doubt.

ANNE: But I think that's one of the reasons that it does stick with you is you watch how far that protagonist went in the course of the story. It had that sweeping feel to it.

DAVID: It did.

ANNE: So, David, you're reading for the book and brew crew. How do you decide what you are going to read next?

DAVID: So that Inspired Book and Brew crew, I mean, it's a local thing but the Facebook group, I really do invite anybody around the country or the world to join that and put out a question of

the week. You know, I'll ask people, what's-what's the best biographies you've ever read? And so if somebody really raves about one then-then I hit GoodReads, of course, and just see what's highly rated. And then our library system here, I don't know how good the library system are everywhere, but our library has an amazing amount of, you know, books that you can just check out on audiobook for free. So I'll just go through the most popular category and just see what's available.

[00:13:40]

ANNE: So it sounds like you're a big audio listener.

DAVID: Definitely. The only time that I would actually read a paper book is if I feel like I am going to need to actually take notes as far as like something that's going to actively, I'm going to be implementing in my business, so a true like business strategy book. But other than that, it's all audio because I'm really into cycling and so I'll put an earbud in one ear and be able to cycle safely. That's the main way that I consume books.

ANNE: Interesting. Has it always been that way for you? Or is it something that you've done recently? Audiobook listenership is up dramatically just over the past few years. It seems to have really caught on at least in the United States and I'm wondering if you were ahead of the curve or a part of the trend.

DAVID: I would say maybe a little bit of ahead of the curve, but I probably have been doing primarily audiobooks for about five or six years. My wife buys me or she'll bring me these paper books and they just sit there. Just walking the dog or taking bike rides, it's just amazing to be able to listen to powerful stories while I'm doing that.

ANNE: Do you find for you that it's a convenience thing or have you really found that listening to a skilled narrator tell you the story is more satisfying for you as a reader?

DAVID: I would say that's definitely 50/50. Certain narrators, yeah, just can make a book so much better. Again, the best ones I've heard are Stephen King books. I don't know, his narrators are just 10/10. That format it just fits my life. I mean, I've had quite a few people recommend the headspace app. You know, meditate, and I'm like I don't meditate but I go for walks and I listen to audiobooks and that's my version of meditation. Books a little bit slow and dry, then I do more like reflection time and it's just on in the background and then obviously I'm more excited when the book is just truly like gripping and I'm 100% focused on it. But both ways, I find value in it and it ends up being this reflective, you know, meditation time or ideally, it's just an amazing book that I enjoy listening to.

ANNE: Okay. So the books you chose today, are they ones that you read on audio?

DAVID: Yes. Two of them I read on audio.

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Readers, I cannot wait for fall to set in here. I love cool mornings and curling up with a book as it gets dark, and I can't wait for fall flavors and seasonings on my table. Not to mention I am stoked about turning on the oven again after too many months of 90-degree temperatures.

And I love PrepDish because they have me covered. Not only does this time-saving whole-food based meal planning service give me more time to read, but they also send my family great-tasting menus that reflect the flavors and produce of the season.

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This month my family is enjoying dinners like white bean and chicken sausage cassoulet, pumpkin seed crusted chicken with baked sweet potatoes & sauteed spinach, lemon caper salmon with Italian quinoa salad, and pulled pork lettuce wraps with citrus slaw. And I also enjoy getting them on the table, lickety split.

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ANNE: David, you know how this works. You're going to tell me three books you love, one book you don't, and what you're reading now and we will talk about what you may enjoy reading and I think listening to next. Did you have a difficult time choosing your favorites? How did you go about picking them?

[00:18:52]

DAVID: I would say that it was - it was fairly easy for me to choose. There's a fourth one that's like right in there that's really recent that would be kinda in this group of books that I love which I describe as just unbelievable nonfiction. I mean, these books just read like suspense thrillers for me, personally, and they're true stories. So right away, these three just jumped out as the ones that-that after I read them, there was this whole group of people that I was like, you gotta read this one.

ANNE: Do you find that's one of the signs of a great book for you? If you finish it and you're looking around going who can I tell about this title?

DAVID: Definitely. Yup, that would be it. You know, there's a couple cycling buddies, a couple patients that come in, and I'm like, I can't wait to see them. I'm going to tell them about this or send them a message right away.

ANNE: Well what did you choose for your first book?

DAVID: So the first book I chose is *American Kingpin* by Nick Bilton.

ANNE: Uh-huh. This is the one that my husband Will read, and he was telling me all about it. I loved *Hatching Twitter* by Nick Bilton, but I have not read this one.

DAVID: This book is incredible. So I mean the basic idea - this is the story of the founding of the silk road, which the silk road was like this Amazon marketplace for illegal drugs. So this like super bright, like 24-year-old physics student. We would like him before he-he started this thing,

he had a little company in Austin called Good Wagon Books, and he and these other volunteers or employees would wander around Austin with wagons and ask people if they had any books they wanted to donate. And some of the books, they would try to sell the books on Amazon or eBay, but then if they weren't able to sell them, they would donate them to prisons.

So ultimately this Ross Ulbricht is super driven by libertarian values and he just fundamentally believes that the war on drugs is wrong. It's putting, in his opinion, relatively innocent people in prison and creates drugs that people take that are unsafe. And he's smart enough to teach himself the coding that he is able to create this online marketplace, essentially single-handedly, and within a couple years, this thing blows up to where it has a million users buying and selling drugs, so I mean, during that time period, a person could just get on this and order like ten pills of ecstasy and they'd show up in a little manilla envelope. There's like multiple agencies that close in on him. What striking there is just the ineptitude of these people. I mean, they refuse to work together. I don't know, it just turns into this suspense book. This Ross Ulbricht, the main character, makes some decisions that we would say is that's-that's reprehensible, but in his mind, I mean, he believed what he was doing was fundamentally good. Basically the ends justify the means, so in his mind, Ross, was like this is a crusade to make the world better by legalizing drugs and creating a free drug marketplace.

I don't know, I would just say that I love books that cross genres and they have multiple themes. This book has, like, this awkward romance. It has a mentorship and friendship theme. Leadership, team work, again, it's a suspense thriller, and there's - there's this whole ethical dilemma. These multiple agencies are closing in, and I won't give anything away, but a couple of the people that are in these agencies end up becoming corrupt and so there's this ethical dilemma where you're like, the bad guy believes he's good, and the good guys are bad. [ANNE LAUGHS] It is such a good book. I just loved it.

[00:22:12]

ANNE: I haven't read the book. I've listened to multiple podcasts about the silk road, so many readers I imagine will know the story even if they haven't read this specific story, but you said that you like books that read like suspense thrillers and I won't say exactly what happens, but this book ends with a show down in a library, which I definitely am intrigued by.

DAVID: Oh, it's amazing. I loved it.

ANNE: Okay. So that's *American Kingpin* by Nick Bilton. David, what did you choose for your second personal favorite?

DAVID: The second book that I would choose as a favorite is *Ship of Gold in the Deep Blue Sea*. That's by Gary Kinder. It was recommended by this patient, we-we kinda had our own little book recommendation club. He's chief financial officer at a local company, and when he came in, I'd just be like, what are you reading? And he recommended this book, and so I was like, all right, I'll read it. Have you read this one?

[00:23:03]

ANNE: No, I've not.

DAVID: Okay, so-so in 1857, this steamliner, it's a central America steamliner. Streamlining basically up from Panama to like Virginia, let's say, but it has 600 passengers onboard. Oh, and then it also has over 500 millions in gold in it, and it ends up in this hurricane off the coast of the Carolinas, ends up sinking. The book jumps back and forth between the story of this sinking. Ultimately, over 400 people pass away, but the others survive, and so the story of the sinking of the ship is very well documented. And I mean, that portion of the book will just put your stomach in your throat. I mean, it's incredible, the story.

But then you jump forward, the other half of the book, it jumps forward to 1984 and this incredibly bright, just kinda mad scientist character, he's based out of Columbus, OH. He's just an incredible inventor, but he's also very charismatic, but ultimately, he convinces a group of investors to invest millions of dollars into this deep sea recovery. And the ship is down at 8000 feet, so the technology isn't even in place to recover this ship. And somehow he convinces these people in, like, you know a landlocked city to drop just millions of dollars on this. The present day story also just ... It's suspense and thriller and there's other people closing in on this shipwreck. This book has breath holding moments that I would say it's really incredible and just a fascinating story.

ANNE: That does sound fascinating. A What Should I Read Next listener recommended a book to me that sounds along those same lines, which makes me think I might find this fascinating. That's called *The Shadow Divers*. is that a book you know?

DAVID: I did. I read that based on a similar recommendation. Somebody said oh, if you love that one, you gotta read *Shadow Divers*. And I agree, that one was ... it was almost as good. But the one little caveat there is like if you start reading this, you're going to be tempted to Google the story, but there's spoilers as soon as you Google because, I mean, the book has its own scandals, you know, the scandals don't end at the end of the book.

ANNE: [LAUGHS] Thank you for the warning. That's much appreciated. What did you choose to round out your favorites, David?

DAVID: My third one is *Elon Musk* by Ashley Vance. After reading this book and then continuing to read the articles about Elon Musk, I mean, I just feel convinced that this is basically the progress story of our lifetime. I mean, you know, the thing that you're just paying attention to the cars or you think, oh, he's just about solar and he's just putting solar roofs, I mean, everything he's doing, fundamentally goes back to this audacious goal of like colonizing Mars as a backup plan and every decision that he makes fundamentally is like evaluating it based on that criteria: does this take us a step closer to traveling to Mars? And does this help to save the world? You know, the interesting thing, he actually would be a total jerk to work for. I don't think I would want

to be around him, but I mean, his goals are so powerful that he is able to inspire his people to do just these most incredible things.

Repeatedly in his career, he would run these companies and he would set these deadlines. He would basically be like, this goal is so important and so important to me that I'm willing to work 18 hours a day on this. And he'd look around and he'd say, I have 50 people and all of them are as excited about this as I am and they'll work 18 hours a day on this. Needless to say, not everybody can function at 18 hours a day, even if the goal is worthy and so he would miss these deadlines by a pretty long amounts of time, but you know, at the end of the day, he got these things done. I don't know for me, it just read in a very fast-paced way where I felt like I cared about the people in the book, so.

[00:26:42]

ANNE: Interesting. Do you find you read a lot of biography?

DAVID: It varies. I mean, I jump around but certainly, if somebody convinces me that something is great, I certainly do love a good biography.

ANNE: David, tell me about a book that wasn't for you.

DAVID: Okay. [LAUGHS] So the book is *The Devil in the White City* and this is by Erik Larson. Again, apparently, I do get a lot of recommendations from patients but I had this architect in my office and we got talking books and he explained that the most recent book he read was this *Devil In The White City* and he said, this is like the quinnestial architect's book.

Basic idea is that for this 1893 Chicago's World Fair, these group of architects were tasked with taking this marshland that just should not have been anything ... Nothing should have been built on it and building this colossal world's fair with all these grand structures and like the biggest ferris wheel in the world. So these architects are working on this audacious goal and then simultaneously, you know, a few blocks away, there's this serial killer named H.H. Holmes and he's a doctor. He's super charismatic and personable. He kinda piece mail builds this hotel that has like secret rooms and secret passageways, and I think it even has a shute that he can trap people in a room and then drop them down a shute into this like torture room in an incinerator in the basement.

As the world's fair is going on, there's all these people coming to town and he's able to basically you know, trap these people and murder them. You know, this guy told me this story and I'm like, oh my gosh, this is going to be such an intense read, mainly because of the subject matter. But then I thought knowing that this was an architect's book, I thought I'd be able to step into the mindset of an architect and appreciate that part more. I started reading the book and if I had to describe Erik Larson's writing style, I would say it's like he plops words on the page. I mean, it just ... [ANNE LAUGHS] I mean, it was written as passionately as like as an instruction manual for a toaster. There was no suspense. I don't know. He wasn't able to make me care about the

characters in anyway. And I kept reading because the story is, like, just astounding, but you know, by the end I was mad. I was like, this is the biggest wasted opportunity in this unbelievable nonfiction category ever. Yeah. I don't know. I mean, I still almost recommend that people read it if they like true crime and they like a good nonfiction story, but it made me mad by the end.

[00:29:06]

ANNE: Okay. You like your good nonfiction stories to read like suspense thrillers, like the ones you've chosen all have pretty brisk pacing.

DAVID: Correct.

ANNE: And move along, where Erik Larson moves more like a textbook that people who love history class read after they've graduated.

DAVID: [LAUGHS] That would be accurate.

ANNE: Okay. 'Cause the people who love Erik Larson love Erik Larson. His books have sold over 6 million copies, which is a ton. Ooh, and Erik Larson fans will want to know that he has a new book coming out on March 3rd called *The Splendid and The Vile*. It's about Churchill in World War II. So, readers, if you are an Erik Larson fan, put that on your list. What are you reading right now, David?

DAVID: I am reading *Killing the S.S.*

ANNE: The one about the war criminals?

DAVID: Yeah, Nazi war criminals and just the hunting of them. I had read *Killing the Rising Sun*, which was really, I mean I found that really interesting. I just feel like I always know more about World War II from the perspective of Europe. *The Power of One* is another book that you know, that opened my eyes to say okay, here's what happened in South Africa during World War II. You know, that was an eyeopener, but *Killing the Rising Sun* was another one that it was like, whoa. This is something I didn't know as much about. I actually have a little idea for a book that I'd like to write someday. I've never read a great book that's really set in the Nazis that are hiding in Argentina after World War II, and so I have kinda an idea for a book that I've been toying with and just kinda working with an outline in my head, and so.

ANNE: Okay. Is there anything you'd like to be different in your reading life?

DAVID: You know, I struggled to think of this because I'd love for you to just recommend an amazing nonfiction book, but it would be fun to have a book that makes me laugh out loud. My wife recently read the book *You*. Have you heard of this one?

[00:30:49]

ANNE: No, who's this by?

DAVID: It's a super popular Netflix show. Basically-

ANNE: [GASPS] Ohh. Oh, wait. I think my hairstylist actually told me that she hated this book. Is it like a thriller? Starts with a bookstore interaction gone horribly wrong?

DAVID: Correct. Yes. I would hear her like snort and laugh out loud from the other room. I'd like a book that does that for me and I did actually finally pick up a David Sedaris book and there was a couple little chuckles, but I don't know. I never - I was trying to think if there is any other book that's truly made me laugh out loud, so if you happen to have something like that, I'd certainly be open to it.

ANNE: Maybe you didn't find the dysfunctional family relatable, like many, many people do.

DAVID: Mmm. The David Sedaris?

ANNE: Yeah. Which one was it, do you know?

DAVID: I started with something about owls, and then I made it through a portion of *Me Talk Pretty Someday*. They were good, I just ... I don't know. It didn't connect with me.

ANNE: Okay. I loved his last one, *Calypso*. I think I was snorting reading about this family's beach home. But the thing about funny books is it has to do so much like you said about how you as a reader connect to the material or don't. David, I think we can maybe find you something funny that you can relate to that is still like firmly in your nonfiction happy place. I don't know if it's going to be funny and still read like a suspense thriller, but I think you would find it interesting and funny.

DAVID: All right.

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ANNE: David, for your favorites, you chose: *American Kingpin* by Nick Bilton, *Ship of Gold in the Deep Blue Sea* by Gary Kinder, and the *Elon Musk* biography by Ashley Vance. So I love the way that you characterized the books that you know you enjoy, unbelievable nonfiction that reads like suspense thrillers. So *Devil in the White City*, not for you because it didn't read like a suspense thriller. I also like the way you highlighted that you like books that cross genres, that have multiple themes. I notice that they do also have a faster pace. They have stories that keep you moving. These are all books that tell great stories, even if they're true stories. And so I think for you what we want in addition to finding a funny book is a book about a topic you just didn't know you were interested in reading about until you read a book that showed you how fascinating it can be like *Ship of Gold in The Deep Blue Sea* or a fascinating book about a topic you know you're interested in. Does it sound like I'm on the right track?

[00:34:27]

DAVID: That sounds perfect.

ANNE: It seems that you're interested in people: how we behave, what we can do, what we can create, and historically where we've been.

DAVID: Definitely.

ANNE: Okay. We got choices. [DAVID LAUGHS] When I think about your book idea and the specific themes you're interested in, my mind goes to World War II nonfiction I've read. Or even the fiction. Like I'm thinking of Georgia Hunter's *We Were The Lucky Ones* based on her family's real life story. You know, actually, David, that is a novel based on Georgia's family true story, all the characters track with people in her family and I think you may enjoy reading that. She has a relative who escaped to I believe it is Brazil. But the book that I thought you might

want to read. It's not on audio, but I think that's okay for you here. A nonfiction book that is about how and why these Nazi war criminals ended up taking refuge in South America, and specifically Argentina. It's a book called *The Real Odessa: How Perone Brought the Nazi War Criminals To Argentina*. Is this a book you know, David?

[00:35:28]

DAVID: I have done research on what books are out there about that time period and I think I came across that name and so, it probably is in my want-to-read list on GoodReads.

ANNE: It's by Uki Goni and it's a big, thick book. This is more textbook than not, and again, it's not available on audio but I can see this being a book that does a great job of diving into a topic that fascinates you, but I can also see this being something that you would want to mark up and take notes on, like you said that you do with some of your nonfiction reads.

This book is by an Argentina writer, and he traces the history of why Argentina. How did so many war criminals, including Eichmann who is generally considered to be the worst. Why did he end up specifically there because he says it was not an accident. The information in this book was suppressed in Argentina. The book has been updated recently. There's new information in light of new documents and history that has come to light, and I think this could really get you thinking, give your fiction writing mind some facts to latch onto as you get to developing that seed of a novel. Does that sound like something you're interested in exploring?

DAVID: It definitely does at some point. I believe I will read it for sure.

ANNE: Okay. I just did a little Googling, which I don't usually do during the show, but I need - I didn't know about this audiobook interest, David, and I want to make sure that I get it right. This one is narrated by Conan O'Brien, Stephen King, Dave Eggers, and Jon Stewart. The book is *Assassination Vacation* by Sarah Vowell. Do you know this book, David?

DAVID: No, but as soon as you said Stephen King, I'm like all right, I'm in.

ANNE: [LAUGHS] Well this may not be what you're thinking. Sarah Vowell is a NPR commentator who is a little bit cultural historian, a little bit comedian. She tells a great story. This book is read by the author, but she also has a lot of special guests including Stephen King. And she writes books with great and funny titles like *Lafayette and the Somewhat United States*, *The Partly Cloudy Patriot*, and her personal collection of stories is called *Take the Cannoli: Stories From the New World*. This book, *Assassination Vacation*, has been called a beach read for history geeks.

DAVID: Okay, that sounds - that sounds up my alley then.

ANNE: The setup here is that she decides that she's interested in history. She has certain things she wants to write about. She doesn't know how to put it together, so what she decides to do is

take a road trip to visit the sites that are in any way relevant to presidential assassinations that actually succeeded. And then some that didn't. She skips JFK entirely, but the one she focuses on are Garfield, McKinley, and Lincoln. So she goes to sites that are ever so slightly related. I mean, she goes to the big locations, of course, like she visited the theatre where Lincoln was shot, but she also goes to museums, statues, libraries, fields that are believed to have artifacts or connections to the assassination, historic sites, anything that has anything to do with the assassination. And it sounds like it would read as kinda discordant and incoherent, but she does really succeed into bringing it together into a cohesive narrative. And she's writing about serious part of American history, obviously tragedies in American history. And yet the way she relates the story and her adventures and her interactions with people helping her, some willing, some just happen to be manning the desk at the museum. But her ear for detail and just her wit in relating the conversation she has with people who may or may not care about her quest. They're so funny. How does this sound to you?

[00:39:15]

DAVID: I think that one sounds awesome.

ANNE: I'm happy to hear it because this is the kind of book that I think maybe you didn't know you wanted to read until you pick it up and start reading it and think, oh my gosh, I didn't realize this is what my reading life has been missing. But the audiobook has received high praise. The cast of narrators is fantastic. They obviously put a great deal of effort into producing a book that was enjoyable to read in this particular format and even before I knew I thought this is sounding like a good pick for you.

DAVID: No, that sounds great. And I don't think I would have come up with that through my own searches ever, so I appreciate it.

ANNE: Next I'm thinking about doing a wild truth is stranger than fiction, real life story. Is that a good start?

DAVID: That sounds great.

ANNE: I'll let it speak for itself. It's called *Conspiracy*. It's by Ryan Holiday. It came out last summer. The subtitle is Peter Thiel, Hulk Hogan, Gawker and the Anatomy of Intrigue. Do you know anything at all about the demise of Gawker? 'Cause that is at the heart of this story.

DAVID: No, I haven't heard anything about that.

ANNE: Gawker Media shut down in 2016. It happened on very short notice. I was surprised at the time. I had no idea why. This book answers the reason why and it is a conspiracy and this is the story of how that came to be. Here's the short version that is laid out in this 11 hour and 39 minute, highly-rated nonfiction book read by the author on audio. I did this on hardcover myself. In 2007, a blog post went up on Gawker Media outing PayPal founder Peter Thiel as gay. He

did not consider himself to be a public man. He thought that was a private matter. He felt deeply victimized that this information was published just he felt to be mean. This might sound disproportionate, but he truly felt that Gawker Media was bad for humanity and should be shut down and he was going to make it happen.

And this is the story of how he quietly moved behind the scenes, watched the signs, waited for his moment — a moment that involves Hulk Hogan, believe it or not — to bring a lawsuit against Gawker Media that resulted in a multi, I mean in the hundreds of millions of dollar judgment against Gawker. They filed bankruptcy. They did close. He wanted to do it without anyone knowing. That didn't quite work out, or there wouldn't be a book with Peter Thiel in the subtitle of this conspiracy story. But this is the truth is stranger than fiction story of the conspiracy to take down Gawker. And also the story of how word got out and we know that this happened and now can read about it. Does that interest you?

[00:41:46]

DAVID: It sounds perfect. It sounds like the exact type of book that I would like, so definitely excited to read that one.

ANNE: Something that I am still surprised about, talking about this book and reading this book myself, is how Ryan Holiday got access to all the people who told their stories. All the information. I mean, all these people chose to talk to him and share this story so he could tell it in this format. So don't miss the introduction. Don't miss the afterword. There's a lot here, and for a story that crosses genres, has multiple themes and reads like a thriller, I think this might be the ticket for you.

DAVID: No, that sounds perfect.

ANNE: I did not expect to be talking about that book today, David. But you never know [BOTH LAUGH] how these conversations are going to go. So, we talked about *The Real Odessa: How Perone Brought The Nazi War Criminals to Argentina* by Uki Goni. We talked about *Assassination Vacation* by Sarah Vowell, and finally, *Conspiracy: Peter Thiel, Hulk Hogan, Gawker, and the Anatomy of Intrigue* by Ryan Holiday. David, of those three books, what do you think you will read next?

DAVID: I would say that I would choose *Assassination Vacation*. I'm ready for something a little bit different, so.

ANNE: All right, well I can't wait to hear what you think. I hope you'll come tell us, and thanks so much for talking books with me today.

DAVID: Thank you.

[CHEERFUL OUTRO MUSIC]

[00:43:07]

ANNE: Hey readers, I hope you enjoyed my discussion with David, and I'd love to hear what YOU think he should read next. That page is at whatshouldireadnextpodcast.com/204 and it's where you'll find the full list of titles we talked about today.

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And as Rainer Maria Rilke said, "ah, how good it is to be among people who are reading." Happy reading, everyone.