



WSIRN Episode 209: racking the audiobook code
Hosted by Anne Bogel, with guest Jamie Freeman

[00:00:00]

ANNE: When you say you listen to a lot of audiobooks, like, what do you mean by that?

JAMIE: I mean, I usually listen to between 150 and 200 per year.

ANNE: Wait, what? [BOTH LAUGH]

[CHEERFUL INTRO MUSIC]

ANNE: Hey readers. I'm Anne Bogel, and this is What Should I Read Next? Episode 209.

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.

Today's guest is Jamie Freeman, a reader who was led to audiobooks by her favorite true crime podcasts... and has since made serious space in her life to read with her earbuds in.

Today we're chatting about spine-tingly crime nonfiction and historical romance, because like many readers, Jamie's tastes are both deep and wide, we gush about our favorite audiobook narrators (and I marvel at the sheer quantity of audiobooks Jamie reads each year), and we tackle a frequently asked question: how to get into an audiobook when you're finding it hard to focus.

Let's get to it!

ANNE: Jamie, welcome to the show.

[00:01:18]

JAMIE: Thanks, Anne. I am extremely excited to be here.

ANNE: You and I were just talking books in person recently. You know I believe in bookish serendipity, right?

JAMIE: That's true.

ANNE: So we've gotten to talk books in the past in New Orleans, Louisiana.

JAMIE: Yeah.

ANNE: And then we just got to do it in Louisville, Kentucky for the book lover retreat, just very recently.

JAMIE: Also in Thomasville, Georgia.

ANNE: [GASPS] I totally forgot about that. The Bookshelf, which I know some of you know The Bookshelf, that's Annie B. Jones' store. Yeah, so where am I going to see you next?

JAMIE: I don't know. I just pretty much follow you around the country apparently, so, I'll come find you in some cool city.

ANNE: Clearly you are willing to put in the work for the sake of your reading life.

JAMIE: This is true.

ANNE: Has it always been that way?

JAMIE: I mean, I've always gone through phases in my reading life where it's sometimes it's more important to me than others, obviously. I think most people do. And so I used to read a lot as a kid. I saw my dad reading a lot and so it was something that was important to me. In high school, I think like most people, I mostly read the assigned reading, but I actually would read the assigned reading. [BOTH LAUGH] Unlike my brother, who just refused to do it and just read CliffNotes. I want to read these books.

ANNE: Is that because he didn't like to read or he didn't like the books? Which I realize could very quickly become the same thing.

JAMIE: Well, yeah. He just doesn't like to read. I've tried for years to get him to read and he just won't do it. [LAUGHS] Other than like Sports Illustrated.

[00:02:41]

ANNE: That is still reading.

JAMIE: True.

ANNE: But it's not like you're going to discuss your favorite novels with him at Thanksgiving dinner.

JAMIE: Exactly. But his wife reads a lot, so we get to talk about books pretty often.

ANNE: So, Jamie, what does your reading life look like these days?

JAMIE: My reading life is extremely varied. These days I mostly listen to audiobooks just because it fits in with my lifestyle better. My job is extremely demanding, so I work a lot. I travel a lot. And just for me, audiobooks are something I can fit in between and during all of those things. So if I'm in the car, if I'm at work, if I'm doing something mindless, I'll put on an audiobook. But the types of books that I listen to are just extremely varied. I don't like to listen to the same type of book twice in a row, so I'm always looking to, like, switch it up and read a historical and then a romance and then a fantasy and then a nonfiction. And I'm pretty much open to any genre or author or any type of book.

ANNE: Does that make it hard to pick though?

JAMIE: Oh, absolutely. As with most readers, my TBR is just continually growing and it's hard to know like what am I going to be in the mood for next? Because you know, you can finish a really good historical fiction as I just did and then I'm like, okay, wait. Do I want to read another historical fiction? No, I want to change it up. I never look at my TBR and just go okay, this is, you know, this is the type of genre that I usually stick with or whatever, it's just always kinda a free-for-all. A lot of times, it's just whatever becomes available from the library [LAUGHS] as kinda my next go-to book 'cause I usually have like 15 books on hold and 15 books checked out. Those are the limits. So it's kinda just me picking from those that I have available to me immediately. And that's again usually pretty varied selection.

ANNE: Okay. Well that answers my - my next question, which was how do you get all of those audiobooks.

JAMIE: Yeah, I do - I do Libby through the library and then I also ... lately I've started getting some advanced listening copies through LibroFM which has been super exciting for me. And then I do Audible too.

ANNE: When you're deciding what you want to read, when you're making your TBR, are you always thinking what would be good on audio? Or do you read what you want to read and just kinda hope that it works out to be okay in the format?

[00:05:04]

JAMIE: I read what I want to read and then just hope it's going to be a good audiobook. And most of the time it is. It's very rare that I come across an audiobook that I start and I'm just like, you know what, I can't do this and just know that someday I'll have to read it in physical form. That happens very rarely. I don't know, I'm not very picky when it comes to how much audiobooks sound I guess.

ANNE: Do you think that's because you listen to so many that you've just gotten used to the format?

JAMIE: I guess? Yeah, I mean I definitely have my favorite like audiobook narrators who if I see that a book has been narrated by one of these narrators, I'm like okay, I've got to check that out, even if it's not a great book. [LAUGHS] I just love the narrator and want to stick with it, you know?

ANNE: Okay, who are some of your favorites?

JAMIE: Okay. I knew you were going to ask me this. [ANNE LAUGHS] Julia Whelan.

ANNE: Uh-huh.

JAMIE: Is one of my favorite narrators and I actually loved her. She wrote a book and narrated it. *My Oxford Year*, and I just absolutely loved that.

ANNE: So there is a full cast recording of *Charlotte's Web* coming out late October with Meryl Streep as the lead, and Julia Whelan has a small role.

JAMIE: That sounds amazing.

ANNE: I don't know if that's what you want to listen to when you're like driving across the southeastern United States, am I wrong? 'Cause I totally ... Basically, I'm picturing in my head right now driving from Baton Rouge to Thomasville, Georgia in a sedan listening to audiobooks.

JAMIE: Yeah, that's all I do. I just drive around and listen to an audiobook. That book sounds amazing, though. I love Meryl Streep and I love Julia Whelan, and believe it or not, but I actually never read *Charlotte's Web*, so this sounds like a must.

ANNE: Bookish serendipity, Jamie.

JAMIE: As always. [LAUGHS]

ANNE: We're on a roll. Okay, so you like Julia Whelan. Who else?

[00:06:46]

JAMIE: Scott Brick.

ANNE: Oh, I don't know him.

JAMIE: You don't know Scott Brick?

ANNE: Maybe I do but I don't know him by name. Maybe I would recognize his voice. What has he done that you really enjoyed?

JAMIE: I'm sure you would recognize his voice. He's one of the most popular audiobook narrators, but he's narrated so many. It's hard to keep up with all of his. It looks like he's done some Harlan Coben books-

ANNE: Nelson DeMille, Orson Scott Card. So I wonder if he's done the Orson Scott Card books I've listened to.

JAMIE: Could be.

ANNE: Interesting.

JAMIE: You'd probably recognize his voice.

ANNE: Okay. Anyone else you want to share?

JAMIE: My other like all-time favorite audiobook narrator is Ari Fliakos. He narrates *The Nix*, which is another book that I really enjoyed, and he is just so funny and so good. It just raises the level of a book just by ten times.

ANNE: He was not on my radar. Or at least his specific name. I wonder if I've listened to him and just didn't know it, because until ... It seems like once I identify, oh, I love the way this person does books, and I really know their name, then I start seeing it everywhere.

JAMIE: Yeah, it's that thing.

ANNE: Oh, he did *Mr. Penumbra*.

JAMIE: Oh, Ari did? Yes, he did, yeah.

ANNE: Interesting. Ad I still haven't read *The Nix*, but I keep hearing it's really good.

JAMIE: It's amazing. It was a five-star read for me.

[00:08:05]

ANNE: So you've got your favorite narrators and that helps a lot.

JAMIE: Absolutely.

ANNE: When you say you listen to a lot of audiobooks, like, what do you mean by that?

JAMIE: I mean, I usually listen to between 150 and 200 per year.

ANNE: Wait, what? [BOTH LAUGH]

JAMIE: Well I typically listen at like 1.5 or like 2x speed so I can plow through them pretty quickly.

ANNE: Okay, so we have different ideas on what it means to drive a lot. [JAMIE LAUGHS]
Wow.

JAMIE: I have an audiobook going almost always. Like I'm one of those people who walk around with the airpods in my ears. I'll be grocery shopping or working or driving or lying in bed or whatever. I've got an audiobook going.

ANNE: How long has it been like that?

JAMIE: Since I think 2016. I listen to the Serial podcast and that was the first podcast I had listened to. I was listening to it like while I was working and then I kinda thought to myself, you know what? If I can listen to this and, like, pay attention to it and enjoy it, I can probably listen to books. And so that's when it started, and it's been nonstop ever since.

ANNE: I am really impressed. Any hot tips for aspiring or regular audiobook listeners? 'Cause you've clearly figured out how to make it work for you.

JAMIE: I would just say if you start listening to a book and it's just not the right one or you just can't get into it or you find yourself not paying attention, just stop and try to come back to it later. That's something that took me a long time to realize because I would start listening to a book and I'd get to be about an hour in, and then realize oh wait, I have no idea what's going on here.

ANNE: Jamie, I've really only been able to articulate in the past maybe six months that there are different stages of audiobook listening for me. If I'm just starting an audiobook, I need to be doing something where I can focus. Like not necessarily driving, not multitasking unless I'm doing something like folding the laundry or putting the dishes away that doesn't require, like, a lot of that kind of mental, so that probably applies to the like the exposition, like the beginning. I need to know the character's names. I need to know who's who and what's what, and what world I'm in and what's happening. But once I get past that point, I can flip it on anywhere and

listen to you know, like five minutes here and there, or I can be driving or doing something that takes a little more focus filing papers.

[00:10:34]

JAMIE: I think you 100% hit the nail on the head though. I mean, once you're getting into a book, you need to focus to understand what's going on and then once you've kinda established everything, you can put a little less effort into it.

ANNE: I think so. It's like at the beginning of a book you have two different mental tasks. You're listening, you know, you're reading with your ears and also your brain is very rapidly making a whole bunch of assessments, like, it's like you're drawing a little map. And once that map is made, you can listen and you don't have to have that other skill set simultaneously being utilized. It can be hard work at the beginning to get started.

JAMIE: Yeah, and I guess sometimes, I don't really feel like putting in the effort for some books, so maybe I'll start something that does take a lot of effort to get started and then realize, you know what, I just need something easy right now, and that's when I'll default to like a cozy mystery which is always my kinda go-to when I need something easy. Or you know, a romance, or things like that maybe don't take quite as much effort to get into.

ANNE: Looking at some books or seeing what the plot is or what it's about if it's nonfiction, do you find by this point that you're able to tell what is going to require that upfront effort and energy and what is not? Or sometimes does it still surprise you?

JAMIE: [LAUGHS] I'm actually one of those people that likes to know as little about a book going into it as possible. So I will not read a synopsis or a plot review. I won't read book reviews online. I've always been that way with books, movies, everything. I don't want to know anything about it. I don't know why. I just want it to be a complete surprise I guess.

ANNE: I appreciate that. And I feel like I'm telling people a lot here on this show don't read the flap copy! [BOTH LAUGH] I'll tell you what you need to know, don't read what the publisher's sales description. And yet you must know enough about a book that you decide that you want to read it, or that you're interested in at least checking it out. How do you manage that tension?

JAMIE: I think most of the time I get my book recommendations either from this podcast and so, I know at least a little bit about it. Or from Instagram, where I'll probably read what the person posted about the book. And sometimes it's just, you know, I know that I like that author or I have seen this book pictured so many times posted on Instagram that I have just gotta get a copy for myself kinda thing.

ANNE: I will definitely keep that in mind when we're talking about what you may enjoy reading next.

[00:13:01]

JAMIE: [LAUGHS] Okay. Sounds good.

ANNE: No, I'm serious. I wouldn't want to tell you too much. I mean, I always try not to tell people too much. We'll be scanty. We'll focus on what the author likes to wear or something.

JAMIE: I don't think that you ever do reveal too much, though. I think you give just the perfect little snippet where I'm like, I want to read that. And not like, oh, well, now I know everything about it, never mind. [BOTH LAUGH]

ANNE: So, Jamie, how did you decide what books to choose today?

JAMIE: It was very hard. To be honest, I have had this like running list for a while of this is what I want to apply with the podcast with. [LAUGHS] And I just had to hunker down and pick some, so these are more kinda recent favorites. I would say within the last two to three years rather than all-time favorites because those are really hard to pick.

ANNE: So hard.

Readers, the holidays can be rough on your schedule and your diet. It happens every year and we end up telling ourselves, "I'm going to make some changes at the New Year." Well don't wait for the new year to start on a better healthier you. Start today with OpenFit.

OpenFit takes all the complexity out of losing weight and getting fit. It's a brand new, super simple streaming service that allows you to work-out from the comfort of your living room in as little as 10 minutes a day.

I understand being pressed for time and usually when I'm in a busy season, going to the gym is one of the first things I would drop. But working out from home makes it super easy to squeeze in a workout. And I'm always glad I did.

You may be working out at home but you're not working out alone. Join amazing trainers like Andrea Rogers, founder of the world-wide sensation, Xtend Barre or the newest workout, Rough Around the Edges, with 6 of the most bad-ass stuntwomen in the business.

They'll coach you through a great workout no matter your fitness level. But it's up to you to put in the work. Put in the work and you can see results within the first 30 days.

Text the code [Read] to 303030 and join me on a fitness journey personalized just for you.

Right now, during the OpenFit 30-day challenge, What Should I Read Next listeners get a special extended 30-day free trial membership to OpenFit when you text [Read] to 303030.

You will get full access to OpenFit –all the workouts and nutrition information –TOTALLY FREE. Again –just text Read to 303030. Standard message and data rates may apply.

Readers, ThirdLove uses data points generated by millions of women who have taken their Fit Finder quiz to design bras with both size and shape in mind for a perfect fit and premium feel.

They offer more than 80 sizes, including their signature half-cup sizes, and they use lightweight, super thin memory foam cups that mold to your shape. And they finish off their bras with straps that won't slip, and tagless labels, making these the most comfortable bras you'll own.

I love my ThirdLove bras and as a repeat customer I have my fit dialed in. But I know how frustrating it can be to order something online and realize it doesn't quite fit. That's why I love that st Thirdlove not only are returns and exchanges free and easy but with their perfect fit promise they also give you 60 days to wear it, wash it, and put it to the test, and if you don't love it, return it.

ThirdLove washes and then donates all of their gently used returned bras to women in need, supporting charities in their local San Francisco Bay Area and across the United States. So far ThirdLove has donated over \$15 million worth of bras.

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 now to find your perfect-fitting bra... and get 15% off your first purchase! That's ThirdLove.com/READNEXT for 15% off today!

ANNE: So, Jamie, 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'll talk about what you may enjoy reading next. What did you choose for your first favorite?

[00:16:57]

JAMIE: All right, for my first book I chose *Beartown* by Fredrik Backman. I think this has been featured on the podcast before as a favorite.

ANNE: I'm sure I've talked about it before.

[00:17:07]

JAMIE: It's just such an incredibly written, beautiful book. You just fall in love with the characters and I just felt like it hit me emotionally so hard. Both *Beartown* and its sequel *Us Against You*. I think that Fredrik Backman is just an incredible writer, and he's such a minimalist writer that I really appreciate that. He can say so many things with so few words and even though the book is technically about hockey and a hockey team, it's really about the relationships and the people and the town and how they all fit in together.

ANNE: It's funny when you plug *Beartown* into like a search engine, it tells you to read like *Friday Night Lights* next.

JAMIE: Oh, no, no, no. [LAUGHS]

ANNE: Which you know books about hockey and baseball and football, and well, I get where you're coming from, but I mean, it's a book about the characters.

JAMIE: Absolutely.

ANNE: When I started listening to Fredrik Backman, I listened to *A Man Called Ove* and that was narrated by George Newburn which I just loved, but the narrator is different for his *Beartown* trilogy. Did you listen to this book? Should I even ask you if you listened to these or should I just assume?

JAMIE: You should probably just assume.

ANNE: Okay.

JAMIE: Except one of my favorites I did read a physical copy. But yes, I did listen to *Beartown*. And it's actually narrated by a female. I'm not sure of her name, but she does an excellent job. I highly recommend the audiobooks.

ANNE: I'm glad to hear it. Jamie, what did you choose for your second book?

JAMIE: So my second book is called *The Kennedy Debutante* by Kerri Maher.

ANNE: Uh-huh. And you were just telling everybody to read this at the book club retreat.

JAMIE: Yes. I plugged it pretty hard. [LAUGHS] So clearly it's one of my favorites.

ANNE: Totally justifiable for a bookie love. Okay, tell us more.

JAMIE: So this is a book about kinda the little unknown sister, one of the Kennedy, The Kennedy sisters, her name is Kathleen Kennedy and her nickname is Kick. It is a historical

fiction. It's set during World War II, but again, it's not about World War II. That just happens to be the backdrop and the time that she lived. This actually a debut novel if I'm not mistaken, and I was just blown away by it. I got an advanced review copy as part of a giveaway contest on Instagram. And so I really knew zero about it. I read it and immediately started like handing it out to people saying you have to read this, you have to read this. [BOTH LAUGH] And so far everyone I've given it to has absolutely loved it. Again, it's beautiful writing. You fall in love with the characters. It takes place in both England and the United States, she kinda goes back and forth. It has a forbidden romance with English royalty and it's just, I mean, it made me laugh, cry. It was so wonderful.

[00:19:55]

ANNE: I love that that book basically fell into your lap and it ended up being perfect for you.

JAMIE: It was 100% book serendipity.

ANNE: Jamie, what did you choose for your third book?

JAMIE: My third favorite book is *I'll Be Gone in the Dark* by Michelle McNamara, and this is actually a true crime nonfiction book about The Golden State killer. I listened to this one too and I'm actually going to recommend that people not listen to it because it is so creepy. I don't typically get affected. I listen to a ton of true crime podcasts, like I'll listen to them when I'm trying to fall asleep at night and it doesn't bother me at all.

ANNE: Really?

JAMIE: Yeah.

ANNE: Wow.

JAMIE: But this book had me literally getting up out of bed, checking my doors to make sure they were locked, making sure my alarm was on. It freaked me out. It was so incredible.

ANNE: I thought you were saying like a warning, but that actually sounded like high praise you were giving it.

JAMIE: Oh, absolutely. [ANNE LAUGHS] It was so good that it scared me, which is hard to do. The really cool thing, or it's not cool, I mean, it's really sad. But high praise for *I'll Be Gone in the Dark* is that the author, Michelle McNamara, at the time of writing this book was married to Patton Oswalt. She was kinda having like sleepless nights because researching this book was just really getting under her skin and one night, Patton said to her, I know you've been having trouble sleeping, take some medicine, get some sleep, I'll take our daughter to school in the morning. And the next morning, unfortunately, he went into her - their room, and she had

passed away. So two people that were close to her actually had to finish writing the book on her behalf.

That story, both the story of The Golden State Killer that she tells, and the story of her research and writing and the eventual passing away, just stuck with me so hard that I don't know, it's like it haunts me in a way.

[00:21:51]

ANNE: I did not know all of that. I didn't know that she didn't finish the book. I knew of her tragic death, but I didn't realize the timing. Okay, but you did when you started listening.

JAMIE: Yes.

ANNE: Interesting, and I'm definitely gonna think about what that means for your reading life. But first tell me about a book that wasn't for you.

JAMIE: I don't mind saying hate for this book even though I'm in the minority. *The Power*. I know that this was, I think Barack Obama said that it was like his best book of 2018 or something like that. I listened to this book funnily enough with a friend of mine, the other Jamie that I know that you've met before as well.

ANNE: Uh-huh.

JAMIE: We listened to it on our way to Thomasville, Georgia. I had to turn it off because I think it was just so gruesome and horrifying that it just made me really angry. And I'm sure that was the point of the book, but I just couldn't handle it and I honestly can't even really explain why it bothered me so much.

ANNE: So that's *The Power* by Naomi Alderman. The people who love this book love it. Which is fantastic. You're not the only dissenter though. You're not all alone in the world. I feel like I'm constantly saying like things Anne Bogel says #74: Whenever it comes to the reading life, it is never just you.

JAMIE: And that's the beautiful thing about reading. [LAUGHS]

ANNE: Indeed. What have you been reading lately?

JAMIE: Well I just finished *Code Name Helene*, which we read for our book club retreat.

ANNE: We did. You should tell us a little bit about this 'cause we've mentioned several times, like oh, I just saw you, but we saw each other because you came to the book club retreat we had recently.

JAMIE: Yeah, so it was 18 of us including you and Ginger and Ariel Lawhon, who wrote *Code Name Helene*. We just had the most amazing time. I know that we say all the time that book people are the best people, but I think it really came through that weekend. I like to say that it was a group of women who just consistently raised each other up and supported each other even though we came from different states, different backgrounds, different walks of life. We all have different careers. But everyone was so respectful of each other and I think we all appreciated each other and our differences. And it was just such a beautiful experience and I mean, honestly, I keep telling people it was life changing and I don't feel like that's a hyperbole. It really was.

[00:24:15]

ANNE: Well I'm so glad you could be there. And something I kept thinking of is something that I think Charlesa said (hi, Charlesa) she said that the thing about getting together getting together with book people is you really do know how ... I mean, something I'm always saying is that talking about books and reading is a shortcut to talking about the things that really matter in life, like if you're making small talk at a party and you're talking about, I don't know, stop signs in your neighborhood, and you know I love urban planning. You're still talking about stop signs in your neighborhood. But when you're talking about books and reading, they provide a really comfortable socially acceptable framework for talking about things of substance that really matter in all of our lives. And you can really see that when you bring a bunch of people together who didn't know each other, but still could really connect over not surfacey things.

JAMIE: Yeah, I mean, some of us kinda knew each other through Instagram and the book club and things like that, but one of the really cool things I think was when I walked in and I saw Kari, who's What Kari Reads on Instagram, you know, we had corresponded before and I walked in and I saw her and we just ran up and gave each other big hugs because it was like, we felt like we knew each other. And the whole weekend was like that. Like we were all old friends.

ANNE: And that's Kari, who is on episode 153 of What Should I Read Next. So if you're listening and you're like hey, I think I know her too, that's why. So, before the retreat, we wanted to read a book together as a book and discuss it together and I really wanted to choose something that no one had read yet, but this is a crowd of readers who reads a lot, so I was like, well how do we work around this? But my friend Ariel Lawhan, who I just love, I know I've recommended her books on the podcast before. *Flight of Dreams*, *I Was Anastasia*, *The Wife*, *The Maid*, *The Mistress*, she has a book coming out in April and it is *Code Name Helene*. I said hey, you're going to SIBA too, you have advanced review copies printed. Do you think you and your publisher might be on board for sending those to our retreaters and we could read it together and maybe you could drive up from Nashville and talk to us? And everybody said yes. And I'll let you take it from there.

JAMIE: I personally did not finish the book before the retreat and I know kinda half of us did and half of us didn't, but even despite that, we just had great conversation both with and without Ariel about the book. We kinda talked about it the morning of without her. Essentially made a list

of our questions and notes and things like that. And then that evening she came and spoke to us and she was just so cool and she was so open about her life and her process and you know, how she comes up with her ideas. And it was such an awesome experience to be able to talk about her own book that's kinda still in the process with her. It was a lot of fun. And so, the book *Code Name Helene* is a historical fiction set during World War II, but again, it's not a World War II book. It is about this incredible woman named Nancy Wake who spied for France and England during World War II and she like lead thousands of men into battle essentially. Almost no one has heard her name and so that's why I love that Ariel wrote about her, you know, as women we can support each other and show that hey, it's not just a man's world, you know? Women do really awesome things too and they did even back when that really didn't happen that much.

ANNE: There was so much to talk about. I think we could have talked about this all weekend without stopping and still not run out of things to talk about.

JAMIE: Absolutely.

ANNE: What else are you reading now, Jamie?

JAMIE: I'm in the middle of *The Priory of the Orange Tree* which I got from one of your lists. I am very slowly making my way through that, and then I just started *The Dutch House* by Ann Patchett, and I'm really enjoying it. I'm almost done.

ANNE: Are you listening to Tom Hanks' narration?

JAMIE: I am! Oh my gosh, I just love having Tom Hanks in my ear.

ANNE: I read that on print, but I did really love that book and I'm interested in rereading it and I like the idea of revisiting it in that format. Although I've heard some jokes about how it sounds like Joe Fox is reading you a story.

JAMIE: [LAUGHS] It does, but that's okay.

ANNE: [LAUGHS] You know it's just occurring to me that it didn't have to be a criticism necessarily. [JAMIE LAUGHS] He's in books. It's totally fine. Jamie, what do you want to be different in your reading life?

JAMIE: Well, I would love to be able to read more physical books. It's something that I can work into my life, I just need to actually do it. Getting books like *Code Name Helene* that I can only read in print that are kinda pushing me to do that.

ANNE: [GASPS] Oh, I didn't even think about that. The audio is not recorded until every word in the book is finalized. And at the time those advanced review copies printed, the copy editing

had not been complete yet. I mean, it's the same for my books that were printed for the event. Like they were early ARCs, and the text is not finalized.

[00:29:06]

JAMIE: Yeah, maybe that's - that's my thing. I just need to get more advanced review copies to change that part of my reading life. [BOTH LAUGH]

ANNE: What do you find intriguing about reading more physical books?

JAMIE: I guess and I know that this has been disproven again and again and again, but it still feels to me sometimes like listening to audiobooks is cheating in a way. I know it activates the same parts of your brain and everything like that, but I still want to get back to that physical turning of the page and being able to flip back through my book and highlight things and stuff like that. I still like to have that tactical feel and I want more of it.

ANNE: I'm just gonna repeat back to you what you already know: It's not cheating. [JAMIE LAUGHS] Reading audiobooks is real reading. However, if this is what you want for your reading life, if what you're longing to do is curl up under a blanket with, like, a mug of something and feel the pages in your hands and like riffle them, then yeah, we can think about how to get more paper in your life. But we can't, maybe manufacture the time. But do you think if you had the right book and maybe you were stuck with it in a sense, the sense being that there's no alternative. If you want to read this book, you have to read it on paper, that that might help you find time?

JAMIE: I think I'll make time for it. Like I made time for *Code Name Helene* because it was a physical book and I wanted to read it, so I made it work.

ANNE: And I'm not saying that you know, there's some like magic switch or literary tomb that can transform your calendar, but many readers have had the experience of gotten way sucked into a book and suddenly, like, made four hours appear over the course of a weekend because they had to know what happened.

JAMIE: Anne, I think you do perform magic on this show just saying.

ANNE: [LAUGHS] Well we're always saying there's no like time-turners involved, but maybe if we could put the right title in your hand, we can at least motivate you to read a couple pages, if that's what you want. I'll think about how we can make that happen.

Jamie, your favorites were *Beartown* by Fredrik Backman, *The Kennedy Debutante* by Keri Maher, and *I'll Be Gone in the Dark* by Michelle McNamara. Not for you was *The Power* by Naomi Alderman. And you like to read all over the place. Okay. Tell me if this resonates. You like going in deep with characters, you like reading about relationships, and I don't just mean

like romantic relationships. I mean like the bonds between people in their various forms and various levels of health. And also, I see a lot of characters facing a dilemma or a really difficult decision in the books you've chosen here. Also strong sense of place. Lots of details. And something you said in your submission was that you love true crime podcasts, but that's not a genre you really explored in print much. I shouldn't say in print to you. [JAMIE LAUGHS] That's not a genre you've explored much in book form. Tell me more about that.

[00:32:06]

JAMIE: I guess I just don't know what true crime books would be good to go to. I have a set of podcasts that I listen to on the regular.

ANNE: What are they? People want to know.

JAMIE: [LAUGHS] Okay, so to be honest, all of my podcasts that I listen to are your two podcasts and then all true crime.

ANNE: Oh, I'm honored to be the outlier.

JAMIE: My favorite ones are: Crime Junkie, My Favorite Murder, Jensen and Holes: The Murder Squad, I'll also listen to anything that Payne Lindsey has produced. He did like Atlanta Monster and Zodiac Monster and things like that. Those are the top ones.

ANNE: So, has it been a question of not knowing what to read in the true crime book world or I've heard a lot of people say that the genre of podcasting, though it can be fraught with like ethical complications, depending on who's telling the story and what their aims are, that investigative long-form format can serve this kind of pursuit really well.

JAMIE: You know, some podcasts, some of the true crime podcasts are contained within an episode in itself and they'll just tell about one case in one episode. But some of them are more like Serial and so it will be ten episodes about one case per season. And I like both options, and so I think if I could find a Serial-type podcast but in book form, I would be all for it. I think I just haven't found the right ones. Other than *I'll Be Gone in the Dark*.

ANNE: Jamie, are you interested in reading about true crime? Or are you interested in reading true crime. Like are you interested in hearing people reflect on the genre and why it's interesting and what it means and the ethical dilemmas therein, or do you just want the stories and you don't really want to zoom out and talk about the story behind the stories?

JAMIE: Open to anything. I'm just always trying to learn. Whatever you throw at me, I'm ready for it.

Readers, that daylight savings time has ended and it's getting dark earlier, it's time for cozying up with a fat novel. And this holiday season, maybe it's time to gift the ones you love (or maybe yourself) with something a little cozier. Like bedding, loungewear, towels and more from Brooklinen.

Brooklinen was the first direct-to-consumer bedding company, meaning they work directly with manufacturers and directly with customers, no middlemen—just a great product and service.

They've now moved beyond the bedroom to offer essentials for your bathroom like towels, shower curtains and bathmats. And even launched ultra-soft loungewear, that makes you feel like you never left bed.

While I hate that it's getting dark earlier, I do love that I naturally head to bed earlier and my Brooklinen sheets are a cozy reward. They are way softer than my old department store sheets, and are perfect for cozying up in.

Brooklinen is delivering comfort all season long.

Like softness? Comfort? Essentials to help you relax? Brooklinen has it all. I couldn't recommend their products more—for graduates, newlyweds, friends or family or treating yourself to the bedroom upgrade you deserve.

Get 10% off AND free shipping, anytime when you shop at Brooklinen.com and use promo code [readnext]. Brooklinen is SO confident in their product that all their sheets, comforters, and towels come with a lifetime warranty!

To get 10% off AND free shipping go to Brooklinen.com -That's B-R-O-O-K-L-I-N-E-N Brooklinen.com, and use the promo code [readnext].

Brooklinen – everything you need to live your most comfortable life.

ANNE: Let's start someplace fun. Have you read the book by the hosts of My Favorite Murder?

[00:35:50]

JAMIE: [LAUGHS] No, I have not.

ANNE: Do you know about this?

JAMIE: I do. Yeah. I got to My Favorite Murder kinda late in the game, so I have a lot of backlog in their podcast that I'm trying to get through, and I keep telling myself once I get caught up, I'm going to listen to *Stay Sexy and Don't Get Murdered*.

ANNE: Yes! That's the one. The Definitive How-to Guide. Don't forget that part.

JAMIE: Yes. [LAUGHS]

[00:36:12]

ANNE: It's so fun. It's read by the authors with Paul Giamatti chiming in occasionally.

JAMIE: Oh, that's hilarious.

ANNE: See, this is actually the kind of book I could listen to even though I'm afraid to listen to the getting murdered part. They tell the story about what brought them together, and you know I don't want to tell you too much 'cause you're not into that. [JAMIE LAUGHS]

JAMIE: Right.

ANNE: But basically, it basically involves meeting mostly by chance at, I think, a party and everybody else leaving the kitchen because they just got so bored listening to these two people talk about true crime. That was a little kinda how our friendship/partnership started story, but what they've done here is of course they talk about how the podcast came to be and why they think it's so interesting. But also the don't get murdered part, which is kinda funny and kinda really not, but they talk about the importance of like embracing and respecting like your inner fear and having responsibility for your own safety and advocating for yourselves, especially if you're a woman over like trying to be nice. Or trying to be helpful.

It's like a memoir/how-to, but they talk about their own backgrounds that brought them to this point to have this sorta interest and this set of ideas that they really want to pass on to listeners. They talk about why they're so interested in true crime stories and they really connect that to issues that are meaningful right now to us individually and to our culture. How does that sound to you?

JAMIE: Yeah, it sounds absolutely perfect and incredible. I just love Karen and Georgia, the two hosts of the podcast so much, so I think anything they put out, I'm ready for it.

ANNE: Okay, I like this. Well this is new. It just came out in May of 2019. And it's not terribly long. That might be a bad thing for you, but it's just over 6 hours.

JAMIE: Okay. Well, hey, that sounds great.

ANNE: I've got to put in a plug for *Hellhound on His Trail*, which we have talked about on the podcast before and I don't need to go there again, but this is the book by Hampton Sides that I know I talked about in the episode with Traci Thomas which readers, if you enjoy true crime, go back and listen to that episode. We'll put a link in the show notes. The subtitle here is the

Stalking of Martin Luther King Jr. and the International Hunt for His Assassin, and it's really excellent.

JAMIE: Okay, so, I've listened to every episode of your podcast and I don't remember this one.

[00:38:34]

ANNE: Really?

JAMIE: And I don't remember this book, but it sounds amazing.

ANNE: This was the first book I recommended to Traci Thomas in episode 162. And if you're looking in your podcast app, that is called *The Best Bad Ending You'll Ever Read*.

JAMIE: I'm going to have to go back and relisten to that.

ANNE: And then listen to the book. 'Cause I think it's up your alley. Let's continue in the true crime vein. Jamie, this is a real classic of the genre if you can say that about a book that just came out in 2012, but true crime as a genre ... it's been around for awhile but it is really everywhere these days. Is that fair?

JAMIE: It's definitely gotten a lot more promonte these days.

ANNE: That's a good way to put it because I mean, Truman Capote was writing true crime.

JAMIE: That's true.

ANNE: But the book I have in mind is by Ann Rule. It's called *The Stranger Beside Me*. Is this one you know?

JAMIE: I've heard of it, but I haven't read it.

ANNE: The story behind the story becomes the story in this book. So the subtitle is the Shocking True Story of Serial Killer Ted Bundy. Listen to this, 'cause this is a bananas: This is Ann Rule's first book. She passed away in July of 2015, but she wrote a whole lot of books. So she said this first book was about Ted Bundy, but amazingly, I'm quoting her, I had the book contract to write about an unknown killer six months before Bundy was identified as the Ted killer. He was called that because he introduced himself to women as "Hi, I'm Ted." So he was called the Ted Killer. Nobody dreamed that was his name.

Okay, so Ann Rule says: And I had known him all along and I didn't realize it. He was my partner in the all night shift at Seattle's crisis clinic. So this writer, who was writing about this unknown man, discovers when he's caught that she has known him all along. And they worked, believe it or not, the suicide hotline together in Seattle.

JAMIE: Oh, my God.

ANNE: Right. So this book is a very meta take on Bundy and the investigation. She was working on this story, the biggest of her career thus far, and she was investigating the victims and trying to deduce patterns left by this serial killer in Seattle and then in Utah where he moved late in 1974. And she had no idea this criminal was someone she considered to be one of her close friends.

[00:40:59]

JAMIE: Oh, my God.

ANNE: The way that this gets so mind blowing is that I'm clearly not an expert here, but Ted Bundy is an actual psychopath who read is so charming to people like Ann Rule, because he did, she just refused to believe for so long that it could possibly be true. Like she knew it was a mistake because there was no way the man she knew could have done these things. But of course, that's what made him so dangerous to so many women. So I know you don't want to know everything, but that's quite a set up and does that catch your interest?

JAMIE: It sounds mind blowing. [LAUGHS]

ANNE: So this is on audio, and I hear from my audio-loving, true-crime friends who can actually listen to these and still sleep at night, I can't imagine what that's like, but I hear it's possible. [JAMIE LAUGHS] That this is fantastic on audio as well.

JAMIE: Good to know.

ANNE: And it'll keep you busy for more than one trip between Baton Rouge and Thomasville.

JAMIE: [LAUGHS] Okay.

ANNE: Jamie, have you read Malcolm Gladwell's new book?

JAMIE: No, I haven't.

ANNE: Okay, so this is called *Talking to Strangers*. It is not true crime, but I wonder if it might be a good pick for you because he wrote this, after he'd done podcasting for years and knew the advantages of the format, what he said in the introduction to the audio version was that he wanted the reader to think of this as an audiobook with the polish of a well-produced podcast.

Well, first let me tell you what the book is about. 'Cause at first when I heard it's called *Talking to Strangers*, I thought, oh, that sounds adorable and whimsical and it is not those things. It's a good book, but it is not those things. The tone and content are serious, like sometimes deadly serious. And what he wants to do here is examine why our interactions with people we don't

know and I'm thinking of the way that your books reflect how our connections between friends and strangers can be fascinating, terrifying, fraught. [JAMIE LAUGHS]

So he wants to examine why those interactions can go really badly wrong. And he uses lots of examples from history and the news, some exploring greater depth than others, but he wants to explore why we miss the other person's meaning. Why we're confident that we're reading someone or a situation correctly even though we could not be more terribly wrong. And some of his examples here are how Neville Chamberlain met with Hitler and was convinced he was pretty much a good guy. You can take him to his word - he wasn't going to invade Poland. It was fine. It would all be fine, and we know it was not fine. Why did Chamberlain think it was?

He talks about Larry Nassar's crimes at Michigan State. Like how he could look parents and girls in the eye and say all is well when we now know nothing was well. It was awful. But no one believed the victims for so long because Nassar was so persuasive. And then what book ends this looks at Sandra Bland's tragic traffic stop in Texas, and something that he does here that's really interesting is he uses whenever possible, audio clips from the news at the time, interviews he was able to conduct with people who had incite or participated in some of the situations he's investigating here. And he also has actors read like, transcripts from court. Things like that. He also looks at things like espionage, which is about persuading other people you are something different than you are to get information you should not have.

So, I think the mix of podcast, which we know you like, and book, which you listen to tons of audiobooks, but I still wonder if this is in a middle space that you might find really interesting. What do you think?

[00:44:36]

JAMIE: It sounds fascinating. I had heard of the book before. I think I actually got an advanced listening copy from LibroFM, but-

ANNE: That's where I got mine.

JAMIE: Yeah. [LAUGHS] You just bumped it way up my list though. I think I just need you to give me synopses of every single book [ANNE LAUGHS] so that I don't have to get them from the Internet and potentially learn too much.

ANNE: We'll see what we can work out there. [JAMIE LAUGHS] And finally, the next obvious book to recommend to you, this is right in line with the others, heavy sarcasm alert, is how about a historical romance?

JAMIE: Yeah.

ANNE: There's two that really spring to mind. Were you saying at the retreat that you were excited to read Heather Maher's next book about Grace Kelly?

JAMIE: Yes.

[00:45:19]

ANNE: Okay, well I think I had that rooted in my mind. There is a historical novel about Grace Kelly that just came out in July of this year, July 2019. It's called *Meet Me in Monaco*. It's by Hazel Gaynor and Heather Webb. Is this a story that you know?

JAMIE: I picked it up from your cart at the book retreat, Anne!

ANNE: No, are you serious?

JAMIE: Yes.

ANNE: Have you read it yet?

JAMIE: [LAUGHS] No.

ANNE: All right, full circle, here we go. Unfortunately this is actually available on audio because it has been published at this point. I think you have the ARC from the ARC Cart. Listeners, we had a cart full of advanced review copies because we wanted to make a lot of books available for people to you know, like practice underlining in or marking up or just to take on the plane so they had something fun to read because books are fun. So, I think I had that on the brain. Wait. Have you read any of it?

JAMIE: No.

ANNE: Okay. This is not a novel of Grace Kelly. So, I believe Heather Maher's book that is coming out in February 2020, which is called *The Girl in White Gloves: A Novel of Grace Kelly*, I think that Grace Kelly is at the center of that story, but I haven't read it yet. I'm speculating based on the title.

Meet Me At Monaco Grace Kelly has more of a bit part. She's more the impotence of a connection than anything else, and this book, which is set in the south of France, in 1955 is where it starts. The inciting incident is that Grace Kelly is there and there's a paparazzi photographer pursuing her, and so she runs into a perfume shop because she's trying to evade him. Which is she is unsuccessful at, but what happens because she was trying to escape this photographer, is that the two women become lifelong friends and the photographer falls in love with the shop owner. And so Grace Kelly walks out the door and back into her regular life and the narrative here is interspersed with details of her love affair, which people have very different opinions on and I'm really wondering how this is going to be handled in that novel of Grace Kelly coming next year. When I say that they have different opinions, some people like to believe she

has happily ever after and some people like to say, are you kidding me? Do you have eyes? But do you have an opinion here, Jamie?

[00:47:25]

JAMIE: I honestly don't know a ton about Grace Kelly, which is why I'm so excited for her book. So I have no opinion on that yet, but I will let you know. [LAUGHS]

ANNE: Well you can wait until February because there's a novel on the way that has your name on it. So what you have is a novel with a love story, really interesting setting, strong sense of place, French Riviera, 1950s. You can, like, smell the lavender wafting off from the fields. You're exploring human connections and difficult choices. Relationships and also writing which is really beautiful, but also really bittersweet because there wouldn't be much of a story if the characters didn't face really difficult choices. And it seems you like to read about such things. You like to see people in dilemmas and see what they do, and this book would deliver on that score. How does that sound?

JAMIE: It sounds amazing. I don't know if you can hear it in my voice, but I'm smiling really big right now. [BOTH LAUGH]

ANNE: I'm so happy to hear it. Okay, so Jamie, we talked too many books because I couldn't help myself. [JAMIE LAUGHS] We talked about *Stay Sexy and Don't Get Murdered*. I probably shouldn't just call them the My Favorite Murder squad. [JAMIE LAUGHS] By Karen Kilgariff and Georgia Hardstark. Also Paul Giamatti on the audio version. *The Stranger Beside Me* by Ann Rule. We wedged in *Talking to Strangers* by Malcom Galdwell, and then *Meet Me At Monaco* by Hazel Gaynor and Heather Webb. Of those slightly more than three books, what do you think you'll read next?

JAMIE: I think I'm going to go with the Ann Rule book. It just sounds creepy.

ANNE: [LAUGHS] I'm glad to hear that, and I can't wait to hear what you think. Jamie, thank you so much for talking books with me today.

JAMIE: Thank you, Anne. This was awesome.

[CHEERFUL OUTRO MUSIC]

ANNE: Hey readers, I hope you enjoyed my discussion with Jamie, and I'd love to hear what YOU think she should read next. That page is at whatshouldireadnextpodcast.com/209 and it's where you'll find the full list of titles we talked about today. You can connect with Jamie on Instagram @jamie.of.all.trades or Twitter @jefreem J-E-F-R-E-E-M.

Subscribe to What Should I Read Next now so you don't miss an episode in Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Spotify, and more. We will see you next week!

If you're on twitter, let me know there @AnneBogel. That is Anne with an E, B as in books -O-G-E-L. Tag us on instagram to share what YOU are reading. You can find me there at [annebogel](#) and at [whatshouldireadnext](#). Our newsletter subscribers are the first to know all the What Should I Read Next news and happenings; if you're not on the list go to [whatshouldireadnextpodcast.com/newsletter](#) to sign up for our free weekly delivery.

If you enjoy this podcast and want to support it, check out our Patreon community at [patreon.com/whatshouldireadnext](#). That is where supporters of the show get behind the scenes peeks at how the show is made, access to our super secret spreadsheet vault with all of the books from over 200 episodes of WSIRN AND bonus episodes of both what should I read next and my other podcast One Great Book. This is a great time to become a supporter and join our community there because One Great Book returns this Friday and I have a bonus episode featuring a title that hasn't been released yet so you know to get your preorder in or to go on and place a library hold request.

Go to [patreon.com/whatshouldireadnext](#) that p-a-t-r-e-o-n, [patreon.com/whatshouldireadnext](#) to become a supporter and get your bonus episodes.

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.