



Read with Pride, Episode 2, The Fiancée Farce

Transcript:

00;00;03;27 - 00;00;19;02

Voiceover

[VOICEOVER] Hello and welcome to Read with Pride, a podcast focused on LGBTQIA+ literature, brought to you by the Ocean County Library's Ocean Pride Committee.

00;00;19;04 - 00;00;25;03

Diane

[DIANE] Hi, I'm Diane, she/her, a librarian from the Ocean County Library System and a member of the Ocean Pride Committee.

00;00;25;06 - 00;01;07;24

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] Hi, I'm Kaitlin. My pronouns are she/her or they/them. I am also a librarian from the Ocean County Library System and part of the Ocean Pride Committee as well. Today we're going to be talking about *The Fiancée Farce* by Alexandria Bellefleur. In *The Fiancée Farce*, Tansy Adam's greatest love is her family's bookstore, passed down from her late father. But when it comes to actual romance, Tansy can't get past the first chapter. Tired of her step family's questions about her love life, Tansy invents Gemma, a fake girlfriend inspired by the stunning cover model on a bestselling book. They'll never actually meet. So what's the harm in a little fib? Yet when real life Gemma crosses Tansy's path, her white lie nearly implodes.

00;01;07;26 - 00;01;11;17

Diane

[DIANE] All right, so what is your overall impression of the book?

00;01;11;19 - 00;02;14;17

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] I found this book to be a ton of fun to read. It was really cute, a little bit lighthearted, but also had some drama and seriousness mixed in there. I've always liked fake relationship plotlines and tropes, and also I've always enjoyed marriage of convenience tropes as well. So seeing the two merge together is something I personally enjoy a lot. It's definitely always been one of my favorite mergings of tropes. Even back to when I was a kid, I really liked the, I think it was an ABC movie, *My Fake Fiancée*, which was a heterosexual telling of this type of story. So it's really interesting getting to see it through a sapphic

representation, because we never used to get this sort of plot line available to us in queer media, because we didn't have the right to get married for a long time there. So we weren't able to do marriage of convenience with two women, but in this one, it's normalized. That's not the problem, that it's two women. And that's was really fun to see.

00;02;14;20 - 00;02;47;24

Diane

[DIANE] I really like this book. I thought it was a very cute romance. Just sweet love story. Like you said, it had some seriousness, some drama, some comedy. But overall I thought it was a really sweet book. My brain kept thinking about pretty women because of the dynamic of the powerful lead. They were both powerful, but in their own sense. One had more power. I thought. Oh, and what I thought was really good was in the whole book, this queer couple, everyone was okay with it. There was no questions. Even the older grandfather's best friend. Everyone was okay with it. So that was a good book.

00;02;47;28 - 00;03;00;11

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] Yes, I agree, I really loved it. So did you find any similarities between you and any of these characters, and if so, which character did you find yourself relating to the most?

00;03;00;14 - 00;03;27;20

Diane

[DIANE] I guess probably Tansy is the one that I related to more, and maybe it is because she was the book nerd and who worked in a bookstore, and she loved the library, but not completely because Tansy is a little more introverted than I am. I think there was a part there, Gemma said she was an extrovert-introverted, and I kind of feel like that's me sometimes, like I am an extrovert, but who needs that introvert time. What about you? Did you find any similarities?

00;03;27;21 - 00;04;24;21

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] Mine is definitely Tansy, just like you said, being the book nerd and being a librarian. I mean, that makes a lot of sense. And I also really love cats. I'm a fan of cardigans, so I kind of definitely got that. And I also really related to, obviously, Tansy's situation was an extremely serious one for why she has people in her past she does not want to run into again, and why she would lie in order to avoid it, but I found that to be something really understandable in terms of her motivations for why this whole lie of her having the fake girlfriend even came about is that idea of, look, there's someone in the past that I really just don't want to see again, and I will avoid them at all costs. And I think I definitely understand and get that for her reasonings, personally and obviously can relate a little bit more than Gemma inheriting and needing to marry to fulfill a legal contract.

00;04;24;24 - 00;04;27;06

Diane

[DIANE] What was your favorite part of the book?

00;04;27;08 - 00;05;24;14

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] I didn't have a single favorite part of the book, but my absolute favorite aspect was the communication throughout a lot of the times, romantic comedy stories, especially, will rely on the trope of misunderstanding and miscommunication, or having someone keeping it secret the entire time and then getting found out at the end and that being the main catalyst for the drama and intrigue that happens in the plot. But this one didn't do that. It kept turning it on its head, and every time I thought there was going to be some sort of misunderstanding, or that one of them was going to keep a secret from the other, they didn't. They just within the next chapter, would have one of their little meetings and be like, "Hey, this is what's happening. This is what's going on. How do you feel about it? And these are where my boundaries are." And it would all get aired very quickly. And I really enjoyed that coming up throughout the book very consistently.

00;05;24;16 - 00;06;15;27

Diane

[DIANE] Yeah. Thinking about it now, I didn't think of that as a favorite part. But you're right, they were very good at communication. Like every time, like you said, every time there was some kind of issue that might arrive, it was like, "Oh, let's talk about it and work through it." I kind of think my favorite part, even though I would never be daring enough to do it, was the glitter in the car. That was a very fun part. I don't want to spoil anything, but I enjoyed that. I also liked - I was rereading it just recently because I read it a while ago. So then I was rereading it before we talked, and there was a scene that Tansy was supposed to, like, decide, you know, Gemma gave her like the idea, like, what about, you know, think about it. And Tansy, the next day was like, oh, I could do is think about it. All I could do is think about Gemma and her lips and her smell and her presence. So that scene I really was enjoying when I reread it.

00;06;15;29 - 00;06;23;23

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] Oh yeah, that one was really romantic. Like, a lot. Now that we've talked about our favorite parts of the book, what was your least favorite part?

00;06;23;25 - 00;06;56;17

Diane

[DIANE] Again, when I first read it, I didn't like how it in the beginning, how Tansy said, "I have this fiancée," and then it was like, oh, six months later. I felt like it went really fast. Although when I read it again, I was like, well, it wasn't about the lie that you made as much as what happens later. But in the beginning I wanted more of that. I wanted more of how did she create this and go on for six months? But then I did think, like in the real world, six months can feel like six seconds. So it kind of was when I thought about it, I was like, oh, this is sort of like the real world. Six months can go really fast. What about you? What was your least favorite?

00;06;56;23 - 00;07;47;02

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] My least favorite was actually something similar, where it was something that I expected at the beginning of the book to be fleshed out more that never did, which was her stepsister and the rest of her sort of step family outside of her step mom, because she really made up this lie in response to

their questions, and they called her out on it in front of everyone. And then you don't really get much of them in the rest of the book. You get them making a comment here and there because they happen to be in the scene, but they're not at the forefront. And I really thought that her relationship dynamic with the stepsister or with the two step cousins might come more to the forefront, but they were very much more of an afterthought. After kind of a very strong introduction to them.

00;07;47;04 - 00;08;02;17

Diane

[DIANE] I wonder if Alexandria Bellefleur has like a longer version of it, because I feel like, part of it, that stepsister and stepmother had that Cinderella kind of feel to it, and you're right, they didn't really delve more. And maybe like as she was writing it, she...

00;08;02;19 - 00;08;19;07

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] She focused a lot more on the step mom in the end, which I appreciated, but I just felt like the step sister and the step cousins, their inclusion felt like they were a lot more side than I had expected from how they were introduced.

00;08;19;09 - 00;08;27;25

Diane

[DIANE] Right, and maybe she just focused more on the romance part, the Tansy and Gemma too, you know? But that's a good point. That's really good. Like we want a little more details.

00;08;27;25 - 00;08;49;27

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] Yes. I wanted to see more of their - of her relationship with them and how we got with the step mom, see if things can move forward, maybe with the step sibling and step cousins as well. But that would be awesome though to see if she ever decides to do a sequel or a follow up in this world, which we, you know - spoiler - but we know she does with some of her other books.

00;08;49;27 - 00;08;56;22

Diane

[DIANE] That's right, that's true. Yes. So my question to you is, did you race to the end? Was it more like a slow burn for you?

00;08;56;24 - 00;09;30;04

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] So for this one, I read more than 60% of it the first day that I picked it up. I was definitely racing at first, and then I tapered a little bit and it ended up - when I was getting towards the end, I think part of it was just that I didn't want it to wrap up too quickly. So I started more listening here and there and getting to the next part was something that I wasn't trying to rush to, because I had rushed through so much of it right up front and realized, hey, I'm going to be over really quickly here.

00;09;30;07 - 00;09;54;19

Diane

[DIANE] Yeah, I listen to most of my books, the majority of them, unless they're graphic novels, and even those you can listen. And a lot of times I'm listening to it on two points here. So I'm racing through many of my books, but I felt that I kept a good pace for it, probably speeding through. I did reread it though, because again, when - to prepare for the podcast, I wanted to make sure I had more thought process when I was reading them.

00;09;54;24 - 00;10;01;06

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] I also was rereading. I did my first listen audio and then my reread through the print copy.

00;10;01;08 - 00;10;14;17

Diane

[DIANE] I do notice when I read print I remember better, but when I went to my book, like I keep a journal of all my books, I didn't have a lot of quotes. And that means I really, really enjoyed the book. You know, that I was just enjoying the story.

00;10;14;24 - 00;10;20;06

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] Yes, you were more organically taking it in, not stopping to have to take the note type of thing.

00;10;20;06 - 00;10;21;11

Diane

[DIANE] Yes, exactly.

00;10;21;13 - 00;10;24;27

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] Which scene stuck with you the most?

00;10;24;29 - 00;10;54;20

Diane

[DIANE] I don't know if I have a specific scene, but when I went to my book to see, I did write the quote down that Tansy said, "Boring was safe because if no one noticed you, they couldn't break your heart." And that quote does resonate with me a little more, because Tansy was trying to just be plain so that she couldn't get hurt again. And that quote really stuck with me, that she felt that way. But obviously you can get hurt no matter what you do, so...

00;10;54;22 - 00;11;38;16

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] My favorite part of it was definitely a more comedic kind of focus, where it was when the dog, Prudence, I believe, steals Tansy's earring and then runs off and leads her to where Gemma and Lucy are having a bit of a talk, and forces her to overhear them and puts her in a circumstance where suddenly so many characters are involved and she's trying to hide that she's there and it's all just because this dog literally was licking her face and stole her earring and just ran off. I thought it was very cute and a really

understandably silly interaction of what a dog really would do and how to get her into the situation she ended up in.

00;11;38;19 - 00;11;49;25

Diane

[DIANE] Yeah, and wasn't in it like a Pomeranian? Kind of like a very cute dog, like, "Oh, you're so cute, Prudence, you're so cute!" And then, yeah, I remember. And then didn't - I think Tansy, like, tries to hide behind the curtain later.

00;11;49;25 - 00;12;13;29

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] Yes she does. Yes. And she's just like, "Am I really doing this?" And kind of calls herself out on it. So it was very silly and just I was laughing the whole time. And that scene definitely stuck with me. When I was thinking about that, I wanted to reread in preparation, for this podcast, I specifically was like, oh, I can't wait to hear that scene again with the dog.

00;12;14;02 - 00;12;16;10

Diane

[DIANE] What did you think of the writing?

00;12;16;13 - 00;13;07;02

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] I liked the writing as a whole. I don't think that it was something that I felt was like, oh, this is the greatest writing that I've ever read, or that I necessarily wanted to quote all the time. But I felt it was pretty fluid. I didn't have any moments where I was like, oh, this is really awkward or cringy, like, whether it be the dialog or the description, which I think is a good spot to hit in a writing style for a romance or romantic comedy style story, because you want something that it's just - it takes you on the ride and it's a type of writing style that gets you in. And like you were saying before, you just want to keep going and you kind of get on a roll. And that's what I liked about this writing style, is once it got going, you were on the ride with it.

00;13;07;04 - 00;13;39;15

Diane

[DIANE] Yeah, I thought it was like you said, there wasn't anything amazing, I mean, it was a very good book. You know, I try not to be so critical of authors because it's got to be so hard, and I can't even imagine, you know, but, it wasn't too hard to read. I like a nice, easy read. Sometimes you just want a nice, easy read. And you're right. None of the scenes were too, like, graphic or I just thought it was a nice read and not too...

00;13;39;18 - 00;13;40;25

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] It flowed nicely.

00;13;40;26 - 00;13;45;03

Diane

[DIANE] Thank you. Yes, thank you for helping me with that.

00;13;45;05 - 00;13;49;19

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] Our next question is we talked about it a little, but did you reread any passages?

00;13;49;19 - 00;14;11;10

Diane

[DIANE] You know, I didn't reread. Obviously that one was a quote I liked, but I don't think I, well, I reread the book to be prepared, but then I also, even today, like as I was driving here, I was playing some like clips of it so that I was like, I just want it fresh in my head. But yeah, so I didn't reread any passages, but I reread the whole, but...

00;14;11;12 - 00;14;31;07

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] That's pretty much what I did too. I feel like this book, especially in some books, there are passages that like, really stick out and you just really like that specific passage. But in this one, I think it's the overall flow of the whole book that really works. And so once you start reading one section, you want to have all of the context surrounding it.

00;14;31;10 - 00;15;03;17

Kaitlin

So that's where I felt like I once I started rereading, I think I started wanting to reread passages just to brush up, but then I ended up just going through the entire book again, and that's how I ended up doing it. So there's no scene that is a particular "I'm going to reread this passage over and over," but I would definitely in another year or two when I am ready for another comedic romance, maybe something that I'm just want to enjoy and I've forgotten some of it. It will be a really good one to just sit down and relisten to.

00;15;03;19 - 00;15;27;08

Diane

[DIANE] I think also a few months ago when I listened to it in January, I was very like, oh, I'm an ally and I'm reading these pride books to get ready for the pride podcast or Read with Pride. But I think in the last few months I've been questioning my sexuality myself. So I read it even differently now, as you know, maybe a queer woman. So I think every time you read a book, you can get something different from each read.

00;15;27;08 - 00;15;37;23

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] Yes. And especially, like you just said, the perspective that you are coming at a book changes. And it's just even within a few months, like how you're going to approach it is going to change.

00;15;37;28 - 00;15;43;02

Diane

[DIANE] Right, exactly. So have you or would you want to read another book by this author?

00;15;43;04 - 00;16;23;21

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] I have read other books by this author. I read her entire series for Written in the Stars, which all of them are set in the same universe and kind of surround the same friend group. And I really enjoyed them. They are a lot more focused on astrology, which is something that I find fun. So I was really excited to see that she had the standalone novel come out, The Fiancee Farce, that has some of my classic tropes I've always been interested in. And I know you had mentioned before that she is coming out with a new book or has come out with a new book really recently, so I'm intrigued to read that one next.

00;16;23;24 - 00;16;45;13

Diane

[DIANE] Yeah, so I never read any of the other ones. But again, when I start to read, I try to like, you know, research and I've read about the Written in the Stars, which we have them all in our system in audio format, I think, and physical. And what's interesting is on her website, she even because I didn't know it was astrology, she has a whole thing that says, what are the character signs for those other books? But yeah...

00;16;45;13 - 00;16;46;11

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] She loves astrology.

00;16;46;11 - 00;16;59;24

Diane

[DIANE] I realize that. So the one that just came out a few weeks ago is called Truly, Madly, Deeply. And I think that's a complete standalone. But I did just request that and I got that as the brand new, you know, the first person to read it. Well, maybe not the first person, but

00;16;59;29 - 00;17;00;23

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] But one of.

00;17;00;23 - 00;17;13;11

Diane

[DIANE] Right. Exactly. Sitting at my desk. So I'm going to hopefully read a few more because it was just a fun read. So sometimes you need just a nice, light, fun read. All right. So we're to our five quick thoughts.

00;17;13;14 - 00;17;16;09

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] Would you recommend this book to someone on the street?

00;17;16;11 - 00;17;25;17

Diane

[DIANE] I would, I believe that every book just needs to find the right person. You know, like almost every book I've read I would recommend to someone. It just has to be the right person.

00;17;25;20 - 00;18;00;07

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] I agree, I am definitely - it depends on the person - but I would and have actually recommended this book to someone on the street before. I met a friend for the first time the day that I started reading this, because it was my bus book and we had met online and we were going to meet up in the city to go see a show. And while we were walking around the streets, we were discussing what we were reading, and I went in about how excited I was and how much I was enjoying it and how I was, gosh, probably like 30, 40% of it at that point in time, and that I thought she would love it. So I have recommended it to someone walking around on the street.

00;18;00;09 - 00;18;06;18

Diane

[DIANE] And is it a fun like when you do recommend it? And then they read it and you're like, "Oh, let's talk about it!" You know, that's always very fun.

00;18;06;21 - 00;18;11;07

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] If you could give this book a different title, what would it be?

00;18;11;09 - 00;18;23;14

Diane

[DIANE] I am so bad at this. I make up these questions, but I don't know what the different title. I mean, it was funny you said My Fake Fiancée, so I'm like, that would be a good name. I didn't think about a different title. What about you? Did you think before

00;18;23;15 - 00;18;37;26

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] I tried. So I'm really bad at titles, but I wanted to do something that was maybe a bit more of a pun. So my thought was Where There's a Will, There's a Wedding to try to keep the alliteration.

00;18;37;28 - 00;18;38;25

Diane

[DIANE] Oh, that's very good.

00;18;38;25 - 00;18;42;12

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] Yeah. Make reference to the will that's forcing them into this predicament.

00;18;42;14 - 00;18;49;01

Diane

[DIANE] That was really good. That's very good, I like that. What emotions did you feel when you were reading this book? I think we spoke about it a little.

00;18;49;04 - 00;19;55;25

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] Most of it was a lot of silliness, sweetness. I also - there were definitely moments because there are some more serious sections which don't want to get into too much spoiler. But when you find out what the history is between Tansy and Tucker, I definitely had a lot of sympathy and empathy for that kind of serious situation. And it also made me a little angry at some of the things that women, young girls have to deal with and the expectations that get put upon them, which also, you see in Gemma, in how she's being forced to marry in order to inherit a company, and then if she doesn't, it's just going to the next male heir. And so it was a very cute, very fun book and I had a lot of those emotions. But it still really like tugged at me at certain points where I was like, hey, yeah that is unfair and this isn't cool. And it makes you question the world around you and the expectations that create the setting that this type of plot can exist in.

00;19;55;27 - 00;20;22;25

Diane

[DIANE] Yeah, I mean, I think I felt a lot of emotions. Well, I thought I just felt like, oh, fun light. But when I listen to you I'm like, oh, that's right. Oh that's right. That part makes me angry. And what's interesting is I felt the whole - everyone was so progressive and it was like, oh yeah, of course you can - all sexualities, everything's wonderful and anyone can marry. But then at the end, like she had to marry to inherit the company. And I understand like the grandfather - am I spoiling too much?

00;20;22;27 - 00;20;33;08

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] No, I don't think so because I, you know, just in general, the entire premise is the grandfather wants her to get married in order to inherit the company. And if it doesn't, then it goes to Tucker.

00;20;33;08 - 00;20;45;08

Diane

[DIANE] Right. And I know the grandfather's reasoning, but just because a grandparent thinks it should be one way doesn't mean, you know, and I think that's important to be like, hey, you know, the world changes and things change.

00;20;45;08 - 00;21;33;16

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] And I, also building off of that, want to point out that, well, there's a lot of the grandfather believes in love and partnership and that's all great and fine. But it made me question while reading it, where does that leave asexual people? Aromantic people? What if Gemma did identify in that vein, and which is someone who wouldn't want to get married? And would she have been supported in that if that was her sexuality? Like, yes, she was supported in that she wanted to marry a woman and she and

that did fulfill the terms. But there are other sexualities that exist. And this stipulation, no matter what his meaning for it was, definitely would have left out a whole sort of identity.

00;21;33;16 - 00;21;36;07

Diane

[DIANE] That's true. Very true.

00;21;36;09 - 00;21;41;27

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] All right. And our next question is what format did you consume the book? Which I think we've answered.

00;21;41;27 - 00;21;43;04

Diane

[DIANE] We did answer. Right. Yeah.

00;21;43;10 - 00;21;49;00

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] I think we both did audio for reading it. And then my reread was a print copy.

00;21;49;00 - 00;22;04;29

Diane

[DIANE] Yeah, mine was audio and then audio and then a little more audio, even my reread. But I do think sometimes I'm like, a print copy, I consume it differently when I'm listening to it or physically holding in my hands. I've noticed that a few times now.

00;22;05;02 - 00;22;44;20

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] And I will say, because the follow up to this is, do you think your reaction would have been different if you read it a different way? Which I did read in a different way. And I definitely think that for romantic comedies, audio was a really great option because you get to hear the dialog playing out and stuff that might seem like it was cheesy or a little stilted on the page, when you're listening to it, you're like, "Ha ha, this is really funny. Oh, they're really quick going back and forth. It feels just like a conversation." So I think I really enjoyed that I read it as an audiobook because I loved their dialog and I loved the way that it was performed, and I think that that was a really great way to read it for the first time.

00;22;44;22 - 00;22;53;14

Diane

[DIANE] Yeah, I think my reaction, I probably would have still been like, "Yay, I love it. It's so cute, you know?" If you could pick a theme song for this book, what would it be?

00;22;53;17 - 00;23;44;23

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] Okay, so she makes a lot of references to Taylor Swift throughout this book, so I decided it had to be a Taylor song, and the one that I thought of was her song Lover because there's a lot of bits in there about making your own rules, and there's this cute little line that's like, "Have I known you 20 seconds or 20 years?" There's some wedding references. And I also like that it's a really nice, romantic, slow song that makes me think of how at Tansy and Gemma's first meeting, when they have to go off and figure out how are they going to address this lie that they found themselves in, in front of all their family. They go off and have a dance together and use that as their cover. So I - it just definitely gives me that vibe of their first scene, interacting together.

00;23;44;25 - 00;24;09;01

Diane

[DIANE] I was wondering, and I did think about Taylor for a bit, but I don't know why It Had to Be You, The Frank Sinatra version, not the Harry Connick Jr., which is also amazing, but kept coming into my head. And I think even though they weren't being with other people, but I think they both had different partners in the past, and they just made it back to each other. So that's the song that kept coming into my head when I was thinking about that question.

00;24;09;05 - 00;24;11;21

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] That's a really cute song. I really like that one for them too.

00;24;11;21 - 00;24;15;12

Diane

[DIANE] So is Lover. Yeah, they're both very good songs. So yeah.

00;24;15;14 - 00;24;18;23

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] So that was the Fiancee Farce.

00;24;18;25 - 00;24;25;06

Diane

[DIANE] Alright, well, thank you. It was great talking to you about it. And that's it. I'm going to have to check out her other books though.

00;24;25;13 - 00;24;27;28

Kaitlin

[KAITLIN] Oh yes, definitely. And I can't wait to read the newest one.

00;24;28;00 - 00;24;41;25

Voiceover

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