



## Read with Pride, Episode 9, Asexual

### ***Transcript:***

00;00;09;05 - 00;01;23;29

Voiceover 1

[VOICEOVER 1] Do you have new or slightly used prom dresses in good condition? Or do you know someone who wants to give away your prom dress? Starting January 2nd, the Ocean County Library invites you to donate your dresses during the 17th annual Prom Dress Collection. Donated dresses will be collected at all of the Ocean County Library branches until February 28th, and will be available for free for students in 8th through 12th grade starting in March at our Prom Dress Giveaways. Before you donate, please ensure that your dresses meet the following criteria: long or short styles from the last five years, gently used and clean dresses ready for attending prom. Please don't donate dresses with rips, tears, or stains, and please don't donate accessories like shoes or purses. For details, check out our website at [theoceancountylibrary.org](http://theoceancountylibrary.org). Visit your local branch or call us at 732-349-6200. We thank you in advance for your donation.

00;01;24;02 - 00;01;34;24

Voiceover 2

[VOICEOVER 2] 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;01;34;26 - 00;01;42;14

Diane

[DIANE] Hello, I am Diane, pronouns she/her. I work at the Toms River branch and I am on the Ocean Pride Committee.

00;01;42;16 - 00;01;50;13

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Hi, my name is Caitlin and my pronouns are she/her or they/them. And I am also on the Ocean Pride Committee.

00;01;50;16 - 00;01;57;11

Lexi

[LEXI] Hi, my name is Lexi. I use she/her. I'm also on the Ocean Pride Committee and I work at Toms River.

00;01;57;13 - 00;02;08;11

Bliss

[BLISS] Hi, my name is Bliss. I use they/them pronouns. I also work in Toms River and I am also on the Ocean Pride Committee. I think we're all on... This is an Ocean Pride Committee podcast, is it not?

00;02;08;11 - 00;02;32;04

Diane

[DIANE] That is true. That is true. But we always say that. We always just like, say that too so people know what they're in for. So, so this month we are specifically talking about books where the main character identified as asexual. This came about when we had a podcast a few months ago where we were saying that many times asexuals are not main characters. So that's why we chose this to talk about.

00;02;32;06 - 00;02;59;28

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Basically what asexuality is, or the asexual spectrum is. Anyone who feels like they have either a lack of sexual attraction to other people, or have a lack, unless under specific circumstances. So again, asexuality, not just really one thing, but it's kind of it's in own entire spectrum of kind of subsets.

00;03;00;02 - 00;05;27;10

Diane

[DIANE] We're going to go around the table. We're going to talk about the books we chose and why we chose them, and just have a good conversation. So I'm going to go first if that's alright. I'm going first because I was excited. So when we had this topic, I looked up in our catalog asexual, and I found a few books that had that as the subject headings. Some were not accurate. It talked about asexual, but not, like, was the main character. But this book that I chose was Every Heart a Doorway by Seanan McGuire. Seanan identifies as, I believe they said asexual themselves. They use they/them, she/her, and she said she likes that because when people call on the phone, they think that it's a Mr. McGuire. So as soon as the solicitor calls, this author will say, "Oh, no, you're wrong." So, the main character of this book definitely identifies as asexual. And I love this book. It's a series The Wayward Children series. I listened to it in audio. So it's a very short book, like 160 pages, but audio it was maybe four hours. Oh, I loved it. But I loved it so much, the series, that I then listened to all of them. There's like 8 or 9, I think. The next one comes out next year. So it was so fun. I would say probably end of October through November. I was just consuming all these books. The story is sort of one of the things they say is what happens to Alice in Wonderland when they come home. So the basis is a child goes through a door. They find a door at some time in their life, and it could be because they feel lonely, because there's some trauma, for many reasons. Then they go to a different world and it could be an Alice in Wonderland type of world. One of them goes to like a Candyland one goes to the underworld, all these different worlds, and then when they come back, if they come back, a lot of times these children want to like go back to the world. It is an adult book. It is definitely an adult book. So like, they're maybe like more teenagers and then they go to this school to try to cope with being back in this reality. And then what's their future look like? So without giving any spoilers, I didn't think my opinion really changed as I read it. I was happy so quick. It was a real quick read and I'm looking at the questions like how did it make me feel? There were like lots of feelings when I read it. Did anybody else read this book?

00;05;27;12 - 00;06;26;23

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Hi, I read it. I love the Wayward Children series so very much. It's one of those ones that is really good for getting people into fantasy as adults, especially with like how you said, it's if Alice or Dorothy or any of our favorite children's fantasy people came back and they are struggling trying to forget the fantastical world that they know exists, yeah. It's really, really fun. And each book in the series goes back and forth between a present timeline and individual person's story. So you get book one, three, five, all the odd number ones are all one timeline connected, telling an overarching story. While each of the even number books are the actual stories of the people when they were kids going to their world, and how they ended up coming back to the real world.

00;06;26;23 - 00;06;30;21

Diane

[DIANE] I didn't even really notice that about the numbers, so...

00;06;30;23 - 00;06;43;23

Lexi

[LEXI] It kind of going like crisscross like that, is it hard to follow? I guess would be my first question. And Diane, when you were listening with audio, was it hard at all for you to keep up with what was happening, or did you feel like it blended well?

00;06;44;01 - 00;07;20;29

Diane

[DIANE] No, I thought it blended well. I didn't think it was hard to follow. Well, there was one part because it was like a Jack and Jill. They're both identify as female. So it was Jacqueline and and Jillian. So there was part of me - there was part - because to not spoil anything - one was supposed to be bad and one was good. So I was like, wait, which one is which? But that could be because I listened to it so fast. These are definitely so quick and short. I can go back and relisten to really get it all. But I didn't think it was hard to follow. I was happy that we had them all on Libby or Hoopla. So I was able to just keep going. I don't like that I'm going to have to wait, I think till February or March for the next book.

00;07;21;04 - 00;07;30;11

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] They do come out very much on schedule, which is nice because it's always once a year you get one per year. But of course, it's every other year for the overarching story.

00;07;30;11 - 00;07;32;03

Bliss

[BLISS] How many titles are there?

00;07;32;03 - 00;07;34;14

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] I feel like there's nine or so.

00;07;34;14 - 00;07;50;16

Diane

[DIANE] I was going to say I think nine is coming out. Her website is very well developed. She also says that she's autistic, the author, which makes sense to me because she writes so much and I'm like, this makes complete sense to me. I feel like her brain must always be going.

00;07;50;16 - 00;08;02;21

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] The way that the worlds are able to, kind of, even though they're their own individual, separate worlds, but then it connects throughout and creates this gigantic multiverse, most of everything. It's so amazing.

00;08;02;22 - 00;08;05;05

Bliss

[BLISS] You're really selling me on this series, I gotta say.

00;08;05;06 - 00;08;06;17

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] It's really good.

00;08;06;19 - 00;08;24;08

Diane

[DIANE] Book ten is coming out in 2025. So maybe it's January. Maybe I only have to wait a little bit. Yes, and I have thought about reading her other books because she's got other series. I did like that as much as this one the lead was asexual, she definitely spoke about all different sexuality.

00;08;24;10 - 00;08;31;11

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Yeah. There's a lot of different main characters that get a different focus, so it's a lot of representation.

00;08;31;11 - 00;08;41;12

Diane

[DIANE] Yes, a lot of representation. That's a better word. So I just loved finding a series that I can sink my teeth into and really enjoy. I hadn't had that in a long time.

00;08;41;14 - 00;08;59;01

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] It's so fun because it really it captures that all the kind of same stuff we probably loved about fantasy stories like Wizard of Oz and Alice in Wonderland when we were kids, but brings it into a very much more mature aspect and then also gives us completely new stories. So I really enjoy it.

00;08;59;01 - 00;09;09;19

Diane

[DAINE] I don't think this was my favorite of all the series. Like, I mean, I liked it as it was so good that it made want to read more. But there was definitely there was one like later on that I was like, "Oh, that one is my favorite."

00;09;09;20 - 00;09;21;13

Lexi

[LEXI] It's like, because usually, I don't know, for me, I'm kind of like the first book I read, I'm like, oh, this is my end-all-be-all. But like, that's so interesting that it got better and better as like the series went.

00;09;21;13 - 00;09;27;29

Diane

[DIANE] Yeah, I think because I was more invested in the characters. You know, I was more like, oh, what's going to happen?

00;09;28;01 - 00;09;34;06

Bliss

[BLISS] With the book being so short too, I can see how the next book almost just feels like a different chapter maybe.

00;09;34;06 - 00;10;08;27

Diane

[DIANE] Yeah. That's true, that's true. Well, give it a try. I will make sure this is back on the shelves. So, like I said, Libby and Hoopla. And then one of our questions is always like, are there any quotes or passages? I always, like, if I'm reading it, I really like quotes or passages. So like one of them, the teacher said, because there's a teacher that's, you know, she said, like, "Only by learning about the journeys of others can we truly understand our own." And I think that's true in books and in life. You know, that's why we like so many books to open our eyes and learn new things. So who's next?

00;10;09;02 - 00;11;59;03

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] I can go next. Alright, so I am really interested in seeing the way that representation in manga has been growing, especially in the last, I want to say like decade or so. And now that we are starting to get people who actually identify as asexual with the words as main characters in manga series, I was really interested in one called I Want to Be a Wall, it's by Honami Shirono, and it is really interesting to me. It's a series for adults, but it's very much something that I think could appeal to multiple ages. It's about a man and a woman who enter into a lavender marriage, basically where the woman, her name is Yuriko, she is asexual. And, the man Gaku, he is a gay man and both of them have kind of lived their lives dealing with judgment from their families. With the expectations of society being pushed into dating or being pushed into situations they're not comfortable with, and so they meet each other and they become close friends and they decide, you know what? Why don't we get married and be partners and then we don't have to have all these societal expectations on us because we visibly seem to have met them. And it's really cute because it's showing how their relationship is still a very - not only is it valid - but it's still extremely important to them. It's even though the marriage, for all intents and purposes, is

considered fake by societal standards because they're not in love, they're not sexual in any way towards each other. They don't have romantic feelings towards each other. It's still a priority bond in their lives.

00;11;59;05 - 00;12;13;09

Lexi

I love this because I've seen this book on so many lists for a long time. I've seen it in Barnes and Noble and I'm always like, I will get to it, and I never have. And I've heard how good this is, and I might want to borrow that. If you would let me.

00;12;13;09 - 00;12;17;04

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Yes, of course, go right ahead. You can take from me.

00;12;17;04 - 00;12;26;00

Lexi

[LEXI] I think I will be, if you don't mind. I have seen on list for so long and today is the day, I guess.

00;12;26;02 - 00;12;28;14

Diane

[DIANE] I have heard about this too. Is it a standalone?

00;12;28;17 - 00;13;07;20

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] No, it's a series. We currently only have the first book in our system, but I'm hoping we get some more of them. I think the third one is out. I have gone ahead and read the second and it's very good. I think that one actually made me cry a little while I was reading it. Like it just was very validating and like really, it just really peaks into like the different ways that relationship emphasis is placed in society. And yeah, I think the author does a great job with it. So we own the first one in the series, but it is a series of as far as I know, it's still continuing. I know there's three volumes so far.

00;13;07;27 - 00;13;12;00

Diane

[DIANE] Sometimes manga takes a little longer to get into our system.

00;13;12;02 - 00;13;20;13

Bliss

[BLISS] I think it's really cool that the book seems to center the queer platonic sort of relationship. I imagine it doesn't use that term, or you probably would have said so already?

00;13;20;14 - 00;13;37;14

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Yeah, it has not said so. But I am glad that they are using words like asexual because I was reading another one for today and we never actually got the words. They don't use the word queer platonic, but I'm hoping maybe as the series goes, maybe we'll get that.

00;13;37;17 - 00;14;04;29

Bliss

[BLISS] That's kind of the thing about queer platonic relationships, though. A lot of the time, like they are things that happen so organically that even in real life, I was in a queer platonic relationship for quite a while before we were like, this is what this is, right? Because that's like the nature of that sort of thing. It just happened so beautifully, organically. And you find that you fit well together with this person and are just like, oh, you take a very central place in my life. Isn't that beautiful?

00;14;05;00 - 00;14;41;12

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Yes. Yeah. And that's one of the things that I really love about this. We have our one main character who does identify specifically as asexual, and we have her husband, again, is a gay man, and he is in love with someone. There is a man that he loves and has a desire for and everything whatsoever, but he puts just as much emphasis on his relationship with her and being a good husband and partner in life to her. And it's just really interesting to see that queer, platonic aspect still get the same level of personal care.

00;14;41;16 - 00;14;41;28

Diane

00;14;42;01 - 00;14;59;20

Bliss

[BLISS] I think that's really great. I love when narratives will explore relationship structures. It's really interesting and beautiful and good to see different relationship structures and poly adjacent relationship structures represented.

00;14;59;20 - 00;15;17;27

Diane

[DAINE] I think it shows that love is abundant. You know, like I think that's what my understanding of like poly is. Like there's enough love. And I even think of when I had children, like I loved my first child so, so much. It's like, how can you love the second child? Well, you can. Like, my heart expands, you know, your heart expands.

00;15;17;27 - 00;15;23;00

Bliss

[BLISS] That's such a beautiful way to say that, Diane. I love that. Love is abundant.

00;15;23;01 - 00;15;23;29

Diane

[DIANE] It is, right?

00;15;23;29 - 00;15;36;21

Lexi

[LEXI] And I like that just because it's not, like, romantic or sexual, it's still prioritized. I like that there's that even footing where you're showing like it is still a valuable relationship.

00;15;36;24 - 00;15;44;03

Diane

[DIANE] So you said you had another book that you were reading and that they never even touched on, like you felt it was supposed to be asexual, but they didn't...

00;15;44;05 - 00;15;45;12

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Are we recording?

00;15;45;14 - 00;15;51;04

Diane

[DIANE] Oh yeah, I hit record during that question. I'm sorry.

00;15;51;06 - 00;18;40;17

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] No you're fine. Yeah. So I think that it is definitely representative of people, or students who are navigating asexuality, the spectrum of asexuality. There is one character who does not say the word, but specifically identifies in such a way that the description is aromantic asexual. But our main character, Yuu, also is the entire premise of the series Bloom into You by Nakatani Nio is Yuu has never been able to feel romantic love never a crush, never anything pretty much. And she's been confessed to, she has been confessed to by one of her friends and she was considering it. She loves the idea of love. She wants to feel it. She's upset very much I think it seems like that she doesn't feel it. And even when she is confessed to, she ends up saying no because she just says, I'm not even going to. I don't feel anything at this point. And she thinks that she might never. And the entire premise kind of goes around that frustration. And she meets a girl who specifically does not want someone to be in love with her. She has a certain amount of personal trauma and things that I won't spoil, but she is looking for someone that she can give affection and love to who she doesn't have to worry about loving her back. And so their setup for their entire relationship is that she can give affection and have feelings for our main character, Yuu, and she likes that Yuu is not going to reciprocate it, and Yuu is actually very relieved to be able to receive affection and love without having expectations on her. So it's never explicitly stated by anyone. It's only ever by the descriptions. And we have one character who - their description is very much what you would get of like a kind of a quintessential idea of aro-ace where they don't feel romantic feelings for anyone, they don't have sexual feelings for anyone. They enjoy watching the friends around them and they're fine. Though mentally, with the concept of being by themselves, they have no desire for anything else out of it. But our main character, Yuu, she is struggling with the fact that she doesn't feel these things, but she wants to very, very much so feel them. So the fact that she's getting someone who is able to give to her the affection, but not expect her to give it back, there is zero expectation of it, it's something that makes her a lot more comfortable.

00;18;40;19 - 00;18;43;09



Lexi

[LEXI] Do you happen to know how the author identifies?

00;18;43;09 - 00;19;03;01

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] No. I was trying to look into it and I have not been able to find any specific information for the author. I've seen a lot of like pieces about people who are discussing whether Bloom into You was positive asexual representation, not so, and things, but nothing about the author themselves.

00;19;03;03 - 00;19;38;22

Lexi

[LEXI] I'm just wondering, because I think there's that rhetoric that's like, I am not sexual or I'm not romantic, but I really want to be. And I feel like for me it's hard because my book was similar where it explored that. And I was like, well, how authentic is this? Is this what you would think a romantic or sexual person would think of someone that's on the spectrum of it or not? And I know, like I ended up looking into my author and she is aromantic and asexual. And I was like, okay, so it makes me feel a little bit better about reading this. It's like coming right from someone.

00;19;38;26 - 00;20;28;25

Bliss

[BLISS] I think part of it too is whether or not someone who wants to feel those things for themselves or to like, feel like they can be part of society, can be hard to distinguish internally. You know what I'm saying? I'm sure in terms of what people want for themselves, barring whatever other social expectations exist, varies but I'm sure it is also extremely common to want to feel like you can just do this societal structure thing, just like pretty much every other queer identity, you know, tends to struggle with variation, but like struggle to think that like, wouldn't it be so much easier if I could just do things the way I was, quote unquote, supposed to?

00;20;28;27 - 00;21;29;08

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Yeah. And I do think, though, that even innately though, for your personal self, it is an authentic thought process that a lot of people might go through. And I think at the end of the day, it's like when we go back to how asexuality is such a spectrum and the people who identify as asexual are going to be so different from one another and what they're each going to want. Yeah. Because like, I know for me personally, I very much identified with Yuu because like I do identify as asexual and demiromantic. So I for many years was like, I don't even understand what it is. I just know I'm not experiencing things the way other people are. But I loved love stories so very much. So I wanted it so much. And seeing her kind of navigating that did speak to at least my experience when I was a teenager. So I appreciated that aspect of kind of the first chunk of the series.

00;21;29;14 - 00;21;38;25

Lexi

[LEXI] So I know you had said that there's like kind of been a bit of a debate, like, is this good? Is this not? Like representation, how did you personally feel? Did you think it did a good job?

00;21;38;25 - 00;22;46;23

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] I think it did a good job of showing how difficult it can be to understand yourself and your reasonings for why you feel a certain way, or why you interpret yourself as feeling a certain way. And one of the things that I liked - I don't want to give too much of this ending away - toward the end, what I will say is that the way the narrative described it, seemed like they were saying that our main character, Yuu, wasn't ace, but she specifies that she does feel love in a different way than what was always represented to her by society, that it's not the same way that other people experience it. It's not the way that was described to her that she's seen the other people around her experience it. So I personally think she still does a very good job of showing someone who might be either gray asexual or demisexual or any of those aspects of the asexual spectrum. I just don't think that the author didn't do a good job of specifying. But again, no labels were used, and I'm not sure that the narrative still felt that Yuu was on the asexual spectrum.

00;22;46;29 - 00;22;51;19

Lexi

[LEXI] That's what I was wondering, like where the author was coming from. I think it's an interesting...

00;22;51;23 - 00;23;14;28

Bliss

[BLISS] I think there is merit, though, in a narrative that has representation that doesn't necessarily use the labels explicitly because we've reached a point where most people at this point understand, okay, gay means that trans means this. But still tons and tons of people have never heard the word asexual. Or if they do, they don't know. They're like, "Well, that's a fake thing." They can't fathom how it would actually present. And so...

00;23;14;28 - 00;23;19;03

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Or they don't understand that it's an umbrella that so many things exist with them.

00;23;19;07 - 00;23;33;23

Bliss

[BLISS] And so to have representation of that experience without language I think is also good. I also don't think all queer representation necessarily needs to be quote unquote good representation.

00;23;33;28 - 00;23;36;21

Lexi

[LEXI] No, that just opens the door for conversation.

00;23;36;21 - 00;23;48;26

Bliss

[BLISS] Yeah, sometimes the experiences that people actually have are extremely stereotypical or cliché or messy or taken in isolation would paint a community in like a bad or weird light.

00;23;48;28 - 00;23;50;06

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] But they're no less valid.

00;23;50;06 - 00;23;58;26

Bliss

[BLISS] Yeah, yeah. I mean, that's the whole thing, right? Queer people are people. So sometimes people are boring, sometimes people are bad, sometimes people are messy.

00;23;58;29 - 00;24;44;10

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] And also there is the level of you don't always know who you are at first, and you need to be allowed to experiment with labels if you so want to be introspective with your feelings and be wrong. So even if that is what ends up happening, I think that overall, I really did like the portrayal of someone who was very much facing their lack of romantic and sexual desires and how they went about navigating it so much like with the people around them and discussing it with their friends. And I enjoyed the entire series. So I would say yeah to your original question.

00;24;44;17 - 00;24;46;27

Lexi

[LEXI] Yeah. Thank you. That's really interesting.

00;24;46;29 - 00;25;04;29

Diane

[DIANE] I think it's nice that there's so many like, options now. Not that there wasn't options, but I think my niece is 12 and she's able to like express this and explore this and try to figure it out. You know whereas I'm 50 so 40 years ago we weren't having conversations about gender, sexuality, you know, like...

00;25;05;02 - 00;26;06;20

Lexi

[LEXI] Yeah, no, I think that's really interesting. I don't know if I said this to Diane in a previous podcast, but you're like, right with that. So like I graduated college, many years ago at this point, and my degree is in gender studies and sexuality. At that point, it was very different. Like obviously these names were out there, but it wasn't commonly used. So it definitely was something that felt very much like you're reading it out of a textbook, or like you have a very vague or a very basic idea of what that definition is. It's not like - and even that it wasn't as intersectional as it is now. There's so much more language that we have now, and that's something that I've seen grow immensely. It's crazy to think about, like, I feel like a lot of people are stuck on, like you're either straight, gay or bi, and then it's like, or you're trans. And then it's like, now you're ace, and now there's all these other things that better fit what people are trying to say. It's such an interesting evolution of how things have kind of changed.

00;26;06;22 - 00;26;40;01

Bliss

[BLISS] It all happened really fast too. So like I came out when I was 13, I'm 26 now and things are so radically different. I have friends I went to high school with who came out, you know, maybe ten years after I did. And just watching, like their process for getting their name changed or getting on hormones. And we're talking about the difference between like 2012 and 2022. You know, we're not talking about you know pre-2000.

00;26;40;07 - 00;26;59;28

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Well I will say, like, when I was a teenager I was exploring the possibility that I would identify as asexual even back then. There was no discussion in my circles or on the online circles that I was in of the split attraction model where you can have a different romantic.

00;26;59;28 - 00;27;09;09

Lexi

[LEXI] Oh, this is - I love talking about this. I love talking about this because people do not understand. It blows people's minds.

00;27;09;11 - 00;27;24;02

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] When I was a kid, I was trying to figure out who I was and what I wanted to use for my label when I didn't understand that you could romantically feel differently than you do sexually. It was so confusing.

00;27;24;02 - 00;27;25;08

Lexi

[LEXI] So we're going to back up a little bit.

00;27;25;12 - 00;27;27;20

Diane

[DIANE] So tell me about what the split - tell me again.

00;27;27;23 - 00;29;10;23

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] The split attraction model basically says that how you feel romantically can be different than your sexual attractions. So for me, I think I mentioned earlier that I go by demiromantic and asexual so I could fall in love with anyone depending upon the level of bond that I create with the person. I am always though asexual. So I can romantically want to be in a relationship with the person, but that even so, I can be romantically attracted to anyone. Man, woman, non-binary person, anyone who is genderfluid, like, literally it does not matter to me the gender of the person. I can be romantically attracted to them. I will never be attracted to anyone sexually. So it's a very different split attraction model in terms of you can be someone who is bisexual, but maybe you only have romantic feelings towards women or things like that. So when I was a teenager trying to figure out my own identity and trying to determine whether I was ace or whether I was pan or whether I was different things, it's

changed so much since, gosh, like 15 years ago. So being able to have more language has, I think, helped a lot with also being able to find more representation too in stories, because a lot of the times I think people think when we didn't discuss it and we were able to verbalize this, you just had very simple like, oh, well, it all goes under this one umbrella and this is the experience.

00;29;10;25 - 00;29;49;05

Bliss

[BLISS] I think labeling and especially labels that are any more niche than gay, straight or bi or trans, I think it gets a little bit of a bad rep because there is a lot of power in being able to find people like yourself. You know, there are lots of people who are like, well, why do you need to have this kind of niche terminology to talk about, blah, blah, like just have relationships with people or don't. And it's like, well, to try and find people like yourself to better understand yourself is so valuable in a way that like, if you've never had to question these sorts of things, you just can't...

00;29;49;08 - 00;30;18;15

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] You can't understand, but once you've gotten to that point, it's so crucial. Like that was something that, again, I spent years and years trying like I wanted to find a label just so I could understand myself better. I knew what my personal experiences were, but trying to describe them, I wanted something more, and it took again many years for, I think, the terminology and to not only come about, but also become broadly spoken about enough for it to reach me.

00;30;18;18 - 00;30;31;06

Diane

[DAINE] And I do like, you're right, having more language because right when I was growing up, it was like you're straight or gay, you know, there was no, you know, and even that wasn't spoken about enough, you know? So to be able to speak about it, you know?

00;30;31;06 - 00;31;01;22

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] And I still often if I don't know the person and I'm just out with a bunch of people or something, I will default to, "Yeah, I'm bi." Like, I'm not getting into it with all these other people. And then as you get to know me, I might actually like specify the specific words that I would use for myself. But a lot of the time even now, like it's hard for I think the general population don't seem to always know that there are more specific terms, or...

00;31;01;25 - 00;31;23;28

Bliss

[BLISS] Yeah, yeah, I think that's a lot of it's true too, because even like I'm demisexual and I think that describes what I've got going on the best out of all other terminology. But between the amount of people who, like, don't think that's a real thing and people who don't know what it means and whether or not they would think it's real, even if they knew what it meant. And I mean this around like other queer people too.

00;31;23;28 - 00;31;28;23

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] The amount of people who will just be like, "Oh, you mean being normal?" You know, like, of course everyone just like...

00;31;28;23 - 00;31;30;27

Lexi

[LEXI] I've heard that so much.

00;31;30;29 - 00;31;41;25

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] No, it's very different because there are like the amount of people who tell me that their experience is "Oh, yeah, I looked at that person at the bar and I was immediately attracted and knew that I would bah bah bah."

00;31;42;02 - 00;31;44;13

Bliss

[BLISS] That is that's crazy to me.

00;31;44;15 - 00;31;46;08

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Yeah, like I can't fathom it.

00;31;46;09 - 00;31;59;06

Bliss

[BLISS] It's not a matter of like preference either. It's not like oh well, I think it would be best to get to know a person before, like, yeah, that probably is best because safety and stuff. But that's not what is the block here.

00;31;59;06 - 00;32;30;26

Lexi

[LEXI] The amount of mental gymnastics people take to separate themselves from others or to group people in is wild. Because yeah, I've heard a lot of people say that being demi is just being normal. Like that's what everyone does. They get to know somebody and then have a relationship or whatever. And it's like, no, that's not everybody's experience. But some people, I think want to use that as a way to make, you know, things more normal or to make them abnormal.

00;32;30;29 - 00;32;31;22

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Exactly.

00;32;31;25 - 00;32;52;15

Bliss

[BLISS] To make it simpler for them. Which is so - it would just drive me crazy too, because the same people who will be like, "Well, that's just being normal" will then turn around and like thirst over some celebrity. Whereas I'm like well you don't know anything about them. What, what what's the - and they're like, "What do you mean? They're just hot. That's all you need to know." And I'm like, what did we just talk about?

00;32;52;19 - 00;33;16;09

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] One of the big things for realizing I was demiromantic was like understanding that love at first sight concepts. Well, there's so much of it in everything, but a lot of people love that trope. And to me, I can't understand it. I can't wrap my head around it at all.

00;33;16;11 - 00;33;45;02

Voiceover 3

[VOICEOVER 3] Are you looking for a blast from the past? Don't forget to tune into Wheeler Talk: the History of Ocean County, a podcast brought to you by me, the local history librarian. Episodes of Wheeler Talk are released monthly. Right here on OCL Sound Waves. Learn about the rich history of Ocean County with topics such as shipwrecks, historic storms, Ocean County's role in the Revolutionary War, tales of local hauntings, and much, much more.

00;33;45;04 - 00;33;51;21

Diane

[DIANE] Did we actually say what demiromantic is? Did we define it?

00;33;51;23 - 00;34;38;21

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Yes. So, demiromantic is you have to have a bond with the person. So, like, if I'm going on dates with someone, like, I'd say from the get go, I'm not going to necessarily view you romantically until we have established an actual bond. And by bond, I don't mean I've known you for a month or two. It's going to need to be a lot longer for myself to be able to switch into feeling romantic towards the person so I can, in terms of starting to go out and date people or things like that, you're not going to just go to the bar and meet someone, or really be able to find someone necessarily on dating apps that you're going to be able to have any sort of immediate connection with in the romantic sense.

00;34;38;23 - 00;34;44;24

Lexi

[LEXI] And demi sexuality is all of these. It's a spectrum. It's everything we've said.

00;34;44;26 - 00;34;56;21

Bliss

[BLISS] I think I have a bit of a capacity to capitalize on, like how I perceive things going. Like if I get enough of your vibe, I'll be like, "Okay, we're not there yet, but I see the path." And I can work with that.

00;34;56;24 - 00;35;25;21

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Yeah. It has been very funny for me like in just whatever relationships existing, we're all in an early stages of something. I'll be like, wow, I really am not - I have no concept of thinking about this person as a potential partner or companion or anything at all in terms of that. And then a year or so later, I'm like, oh, that is completely different now. And it's again, because the bond is then there type of thing.

00;35;25;22 - 00;35;56;26

Bliss

[BLISS] It's so funny because I remembered in high school, I really did not date in high school. I like dated one of my friends for a short period of time because it was one of those things where it's like, we're so close, we should date. Yeah, but I always thought dating in high school was like so silly because in my brain I was just like, well, you barely even know these people. And like, how many relationships last? And like, I just couldn't fathom this idea that you would meet someone and be so swept up like that. Yeah. I didn't experience that until much later in life. And it's really only happened like twice.

00;35;56;26 - 00;36;03;16

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] But yeah. So, well, back to the book cafe aspect of it.

00;36;03;19 - 00;37;41;29

Bliss

[BLISS] Can I go next? Because... because my book has a demisexual main character, so I feel like excellent transition. The book I read is called Role Playing by Cathy Yardley, and it is a pretty standard edition grumpy/sunshine romance novel, all that good stuff. We love that. But, one of the main characters is demisexual, and it is addressed explicitly and like by name more than once. There is a moderately spicy scene that happens eventually and like there is discussion of, well, you know, how and why is this? Is this okay for you? Is it why now and not before? And I really like that that is addressed. The actual like plot of the book is there is a woman named Maggie. Her son has gone off to college and she's divorced. So she's become like a bit of a hermit in her house in a relatively rural part of Washington. And there is a man named Aiden who moved back to this smaller town area because his mother is just getting older and needing a lot more help. And he has also only been in a couple of relationships in his life. His mom is always on him, like, why don't you have a girlfriend? Why don't you have a wife? What I think is really nice about this book is that they're both older. Like, I think Maggie is 48 and Aiden is in his early 50s, which I also really enjoyed because I just.

00;37;42;02 - 00;37;50;16

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] I didn't expect it like until like when you said older I was wondering like 30? I thought you were gonna say that.

00;37;50;18 - 00;38;29;00

Bliss



[BLISS] No, these are like distinctly like adult people. 50 year old. It's really nice to see that, like, love isn't the territory. First of all, love is not just for the, for the territory of like, all the sexual people, which is like non-asexual people, but also not the territory of the young. I think it's really great. And a lot of the plot ends up just revolving around the two of them, like being friends, but I couldn't - but of course we don't have - I don't I don't like him like that, I couldn't. And it all gets a little more complicated when Maggie realizes that Aiden is demisexual and it's like, oh, well, I have this.

00:38;29;01 - 00:38;30;06

Diane

[DIANE] Oh, he's demisexual?

00:38;30;07 - 00:38;32;25

Bliss

[BLISS] Yes. So that's also cool too.

00:38;32;25 - 00:38;36;24

Diane

[DAINE] Oh yeah, I thought it was going to be, I don't know why. You know, that's a stereotypical thing.

00:38;36;24 - 00:39;55;22

Bliss

[BLISS] Yeah. And it's because he's as a character too is like a relatively masculine man too. So a lot of that tends to come with like a sort of whether real or not, like hypersexual swagger or whatever. And that's a lot of why there's a bunch of rumors and stuff in the family about like, well, what's wrong with Aiden? You know, why is he this old and he doesn't even he doesn't date? He doesn't do anything. And his best friend, who's like, a real frat guy type guy, is like, well, why don't we go out to the bar and, like, meet some ladies? It's just all very interesting to see how this whole dynamic plays out. I really, really enjoyed reading it. I will say I chose this book because it was recommended to me by my partner Frank, because Frank knows what I like. And Frank is right, they're very nerdy. They're very into like online gaming guild stuff. That's how they meet and bond. And there's a whole misunderstanding in the first half of the book where because of like, their gamer tags and general demeanors, Aiden thinks Maggie is super old, like 70 or 80, and Maggie thinks Aiden is like 18 or 21. So there's also that whole hump to get over in the beginning, and then they meet for the first time. They're like, "Oh no, we're the same age. Oh no, you're really cool. But is this weird? I don't know."

00:39;55;23 - 00:39;57;23

Diane

[DIANE] I'm looking it up now to see if we have it on hoopla.

00:39;57;28 - 00:39;59;16

Bliss

[BLISS] It's really delightful.

00:39;59;18 - 00:40;02;06

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] I feel like we do, because I think Frank's also recommended it to me.

00;40;02;06 - 00;40;51;23

Bliss

[BLISS] Frank's recommended this book to just about everybody. One thing about Frank, he's going to recommend you a book. But what I've really enjoyed about this was the way, both directly and indirectly, demisexuality was addressed because the first time I noticed it is where Aiden is first starting to realize, "Oh, maybe I am attracted to Maggie. That doesn't happen. That's weird." And he describes it specifically as like he doesn't feel unattractive that he's suddenly unattracted. He's just suddenly, like, curious. And that's always how like that starts for me, where it's like, not necessarily instant attraction, but it's like suddenly I'm like, I need to know everything about you for some reason I cannot describe.

00;40;51;25 - 00;40;52;18

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] I get this, yeah.

00;40;52;25 - 00;42;17;25

Bliss

[BLISS] And then it all snowballs from there and I just think that's so neat and cool. And there's another little line he talks about, kind of how we were talking about it can be so difficult to figure out what you've got going on when you don't have the language, which is the case with Aiden initially. It's actually Maggie who gives him the language, which is, right, it's so sweet. But he is speaking to someone about it and he says, I don't know what my particular label is, but yeah, I'm interested in guys as well as girls when I'm interested, which isn't often. And I feel like that really speaks to that moment of where you're like, am I ace or am I bi? Can I be both somehow? What is happening? It's all something that is so variable, like demisexuality specifically can be so, so sticky and weird to figure out. Not that it's easy to figure out that you're ace when there's a lot of pressure and stuff, but when at least when you have like a stagnant state of being... stagnant sounds a little harsh, but you know what I mean. Like non-shifting state of how things work. You can be like okay I might not know why I'm like this, but I know what I am. But when do you think you've got it and then suddenly something throws you a curveball. You're like, well, I don't know what's going on. And maybe it's none of my business.

00;42;17;27 - 00;42;24;07

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] You're like, you know what, maybe I'll stop thinking about it for a couple years, make it easier.

00;42;24;09 - 00;42;55;12

Bliss

[BLISS] I will say, as far as did my opinion of this book change as I read it, I started to like it more as I read it. Initially for - I love - don't get me wrong when I say this, I love that corny standard romance that is not necessarily groundbreaking or incredible, but just makes you feel real fluffy on the inside. That is largely where this lives. But when you get towards the back third of the book, it starts getting like a lot more serious as the relationship is more of a relationship.

00;42;55;14 - 00;43;01;28

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Would you say the first third or whatever was hard for you to be interested in, like to push through?

00;43;02;00 - 00;43;32;04

Bliss

[BLISS] No, because I found the characters really delightful. There are many ways in which Aiden actually reminds me in, of one of my partners now, so that maybe that was just me. I don't know, I was like, heehee. Haha. It's just like them. But I still thought it was like entertaining and funny, especially the misunderstanding of the ages and stuff, because initially they're only interacting online through their gamer guild. All of that misunderstanding is very, very funny because you, as the reader know. But both of them don't, and you're just watching them not know what's going on.

00;43;32;07 - 00;43;40;06

Lexi

[LEXI] That's a good setup. I think it's interesting that it's a virtual thing instead of like a mistaken identity in person. I like how that's kind of brought into that book. That's funny.

00;43;40;09 - 00;43;54;21

Bliss

[BLISS] It does a good job of flirting with the tropes but also giving them more depth, like there's allusions to like the only one bed and the fake dating and like they don't do it that way. It's a very self-aware romance novel, I think.

00;43;54;22 - 00;43;56;09

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Yeah, they kind of invert it a little bit.

00;43;56;14 - 00;44;15;02

Bliss

[BLISS] A little bit. Yeah, it goes up to that trope and then they take like it's written like that's how it's going to happen. And then like the actual more logical response happens. They're both like, "Yeah, that'd be crazy. Why would we share a bed? There's a Best Western down the street, like..."

00;44;15;04 - 00;44;16;13

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] That's very cute.

00;44;16;16 - 00;44;22;13

Diane

[DIANE] I put it on my list. I mean, 40 year olds, 50 year olds being in love. I love it.

00;44;22;16 - 00;44;59;02

Bliss

[BLISS] I also just think that's so cool. And I actually think that given that Aiden figures out that he's demisexual within the course of this book, that's really cool too, because queerness is also not just the domain of the young. Especially now, and especially as times change more and more people who are all adults and not even freshly whole adults would and are reasonably finding out more about themselves now that the language is here and it's less like hush hush. So I think this is a real - I've really, really enjoyed reading this.

00;44;59;04 - 00;45;06;11

Diane

[DIANE] Good choice. Good choice. One left to go. It is your turn.

00;45;06;14 - 00;47;33;11

Lexi

[LEXI] So I read Loveless by Alice Oseman, and, she is the author who wrote the Heartstopper series. I have not read them, but I know everybody has lost their minds and love them, so feel free to jump in. It, I think, sounds similar, I guess. Yeah, I really liked it. It was about this girl named Georgia, and it kind of starts when her high school years are over, and then she's transitioning over into college, and she remarks that she's never felt attracted to anyone. And the line she keeps kind of going off of is, "I've never even had my first kiss." And she feels like she is such a weird outlier that she's going to college and has never experienced that. This book also takes place in the UK, so they say the grades a little bit different, like they're like year 12 and like year ten. Like I was like, try to keep up with that. But it's cute. But yeah. So she kind of talks about how she hasn't had those experiences. She really wants them. It reminds me of a book we were talking about earlier where she knows she is different and something's a little bit off, but she very, very much wants to feel these stereotypical feelings so then it transitions to her in college. And it's really just kind of going off her self-discovery of figuring out the words and then trying to see how that fits in her life. There's like a bunch of cute rom com tropes where, like, she tries to, like, see what it's like kissing her best friend and like, that ends up horribly. As it does. So it's a really interesting book. I thought it did a really good job of showcasing what it means to be ace and like what the spectrum could look like, and also that ace panic. What am I? Why am I like this? Like, what am I missing? The whole thing. But yeah, this is technically a YA book and I like that it's YA because it's that kind of YA where it's not young high school. It's that true young adult label where like bridges between teens and adult move and it just does a really good job. I wish I had this book when I was at college. Like, it would have made things a lot easier with understanding personal experiences and my friends and my degree and all this other stuff like it did a very good job of personalizing this, and I've heard she's really good with that in her other books as well.

00;47;33;11 - 00;47;38;04

Diane

[DIANE] The difference is this is not a graphic novel, right, Loveless?

00;47;38;10 - 00;47;56;06

Lexi

[LEXI] It's not a graphic novel. It's not autobiographical too. She does identify she says she/her and she used they/them as well. But they are aromantic and asexual. But it's not an autobiography. But yeah. So Heartstopper, is it like the same narrative I've heard?

00;47;56;06 - 00;48;12;16

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] I don't know if Loveless is in the Heartstopper multiverse. Some are, like, I know the obviously Solitaire is, there's Nick and Charlie, and I think there's one about a band that is in the same universe.

00;48;12;16 - 00;48;18;08

Lexi

[LEXI] Oh yeah. I think because when I was looking at reviews of this book, I think they did reference other people's names.

00;48;18;08 - 00;48;20;00

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Oh, Radio Silence is in the universe.

00;48;20;00 - 00;48;20;16

Diane

[DIANE] There's so many.

00;48;20;19 - 00;48;58;02

Lexi

[LEXI] Yeah, yeah. It's good. She has a really good knack for writing. But yeah, it's really cute. It's nice. One of the quotes that kind of stuck with me or not really quote, but lines is just the idea of being loveless means you're unlovable. And yeah, it was really sad. I was like, no, it's not what that means. But it was really kind of heartbreaking in that sense. But then it got better and became more like, like full circle of like, no, like just because you don't feel romantic attraction or sexual attraction does not mean that you are less than. So it did a really good job. I really liked it.

00;48;58;05 - 00;49;00;12

Diane

[DIANE] So yeah, it is definitely a part of the universe.

00;49;00;12 - 00;50;00;05

Lexi

[LEXI] Yeah it is. Yeah, that's good to know. And you know what? If you had read the other books and things, it probably would have been even more of a tie in, like a better experience because you would have had that background. I will say that I did do the audiobook, which is kind of my thing lately, and I'm sorry to say, I did not care for her voice. The narrator's voice was very - she didn't have an awful voice, but it was not the right voice for this narration, like her voice should have been for like a horror story or like being in a deep depression, but like, not one where you come out of. So that did hinder me a little bit. Like I felt like it was hard for me to be as immersed in the story just because the voice really threw

me. And because of my auditory things, voices or sound are very important to me to be able to understand. It took a little bit to get past that, but the story remained the same. You know, it was good.

00;50;00;08 - 00;50;03;10

Diane

[DIANE] Yeah, I've heard a lot of people say that it's a great asexual story.

00;50;03;16 - 00;50;04;17

Lexi

[LEXI] It is.

00;50;04;19 - 00;50;43;06

Bliss

[BLISS] I like that it touches on how distinctly how much it can affect your self-worth. Because that's really hard when you're just thinking like... Because it's like love is the center of so much of the good things in life, like, you know, media, music, and stories is all centered around romantic love, which is beautiful and awesome, but also not the only thing, but it makes you feel because of the way it's centered, like when that is not happening correctly, so to speak from a societal standpoint like that, there must be something fundamentally wrong or like even evil about you.

00;50;43;13 - 00;52;06;11

Lexi

[LEXI] It's interesting. Yeah. It's just, anything I think that makes you quote unquote different from the status quo. It's just it makes you internalize that, especially when you're at a very vulnerable age where, you know, she's 18. So she identifies over the course of the book and it's not a secret. This is part of the whole thing. I'm not spoiling as asexual. And then she's trying to figure out what about romantically like is that different for her. She kind of struggles with it because I think for her she viewed it as like the double whammy of not being romantic and not being sexual and feeling like that was too bad, it was too much, and she was too broken. So it was nice to see the full circle of how she kind of changed through the course of the book about her views on herself and just her self-esteem. It was nice. I think a lot of people do put, you know, romantic love as the forefront of every important relationship. And I found myself even falling into some bias, like I was reading this book. And when she was trying to enter a relationship with her best friend, they were having these conversations and I was like, oh my God, are they going to end up together? Is that how this book is going to turn? And it clearly wasn't. But I still had that in the back of my mind of like, oh wait, these two are in this sort of relationship. Is it going to turn romantic?

00;52;06;11 - 00;52;12;01

Bliss

[BLISS] Because that's the formula, right? Like that's what we've all been raised on from literally forever.

00;52;12;02 - 00;52;17;07

Diane

[LEXI] Yeah, so this book did a really good job of disrupting that narrative.

00;52;17;07 - 00;52;50;02

Diane

[DIANE] Well, it's interesting when I was looking up, since we were just talking about the formula, I was looking up our subject asexual in our catalog, and one of the ones I found was a book that was very much like, oh, she blah, blah, blah is asexual until she meets... and I'm like, that's not right, you know, not right, you know. So, and some people might have a child who identifies as asexual, and my mom will say, like, well, until they meet someone and it's like, no, that's not...

00;52;50;04 - 00;53;08;09

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] And here's the thing is, even if someone's identity does shift, which they might end up feeling like they are gray, asexual or demisexual, like it's so invalidating to like, this is what I this is my experience of myself now. And to have someone be like, well, until this happens.

00;53;08;09 - 00;53;09;22

Lexi

[LEXI] Only until this part.

00;53;09;27 - 00;53;13;06

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] And it's like you don't know that. I could meet that person never.

00;53;13;09 - 00;53;25;26

Bliss

[BLISS] And really, that's no less invalidating than someone saying to like a lesbian, "Well, until you meet the right man." Which most people at this point most reasonable people at this point acknowledge is like not cool.

00;53;26;00 - 00;53;56;02

Diane

[CAITLIN] And then it makes it really frustrating I think also for people who might still be exploring their identity because then they're like, well, I can't actually then readjust my perception of myself because then I'm proving those people right. And it just makes the whole thing something that should be about yourself and your own personal understanding about yourself feels so, so kind of based in what society has been telling you even...

00;53;56;02 - 00;54;39;17

Lexi

[LEXI] That's a huge thing looming over your shoulder when you're trying to figure out who you are and what you are and how you are. And in the book, it's interesting because she was talking about and I think this book, this was written, I think, in 2020. It is 2020, okay, not that long ago, but definitely different than my generation. And she was talking about how she hadn't really heard the name, like

asexual. And it was so moving and important for her to find a label for herself because it gave her that. But yeah, no, it was great. It gave her a label. Pick it right back off.

00;54;39;19 - 00;55;08;28

Diane

[DIANE] But I think, Alice, how do I say Oseman's? I mean, I've read all the Heartstoppers and then I liked it so much I went into other - Heartstopper was, for me, I like a graphic novel that's chunky, that I can read in like an hour. That doesn't have too many words. I love Heartstopper, it's very like you can absorb, but there was another one like, Belle of the Ball, very similar - that, Bloom, very similar. That's what I mean. I like that kind of graphic novel. So that's interesting though that that one is not a graphic novel.

00;55;09;00 - 00;55;28;00

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Yeah, she I think started with novels, I think. I think Solitaire might have come first in terms of publication, because Heartstopper was actually a webcomic for a long time. I was actually part of like the Kickstarter and everything... before she got like the actual comics publishing to graphic novels.

00;55;28;00 - 00;55;57;16

Lexi

[LEXI] Oh, that's so interesting because this book, definitely it should be a graphic novel. It's not, and I don't mean this in a negative way, but it doesn't have enough-ish to be a regular novel. Like, I think the way that was maybe, I don't know, maybe that's interesting. Maybe the way that it was supposed to be in the original format was that way. I don't know, but that's interesting because this definitely reads like it should be a graphic novel.

00;55;57;20 - 00;56;03;12

Bliss

[BLISS] Would you say that there are things that would have been better conveyed visually than textually?

00;56;03;14 - 00;56;19;02

Diane

[LEXI] Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. I think that's the thing. Like, you can only explain things so much, and I love graphic novels, like I'm a huge graphic novel reader and like, yes, I think there are some things that would have been better to see, to show rather than tell.

00;56;19;03 - 00;56;43;18

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] I'm so intrigued because I haven't gotten to read this one yet, but I have read some of her other novels, like I've read in Solitaire and Radio Silence, which actually also features one of the co-main characters, not the narrator, but is demisexual. And I remember feeling like they were really well done and really good, but they came kind of before I think she ended up being so focused on the webcomic.



00;56;43;19 - 00;56;48;07

Diane

[LEXI] Yeah, interesting. That's a really cool evolution as a writer. Yeah, interesting.

00;56;48;07 - 00;56;58;23

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Because I'm sure that that does switch how you approach stories and narrations, if you switch into, well, I'm doing this constantly and thinking about telling stories in this format constantly.

00;56;58;23 - 00;57;10;06

Lexi

[LEXI] Yeah, it's kind of like when you have a novelization of a show or something, and I feel like sometimes I'm like, oh, this gives me so much more lore I needed. And other times I'm like, I can see why this is more of a show.

00;57;10;08 - 00;57;14;02

Diane

[DIANE] For Heartstopper, she was also the illustrator?

00;57;14;07 - 00;57;15;18

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Yes, she is.

00;57;15;21 - 00;57;16;28

Diane

[DIANE] Very versatile.

00;57;16;28 - 00;57;20;15

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] And I think they're also part of the show, I want to say?

00;57;20;15 - 00;57;25;29

Diane

[DIANE] Oh, probably the Netflix show. I think so. They definitely used her illustrations in the, yeah...

00;57;25;29 - 00;57;39;10

Lexi

[LEXI] And she did the cover for this book too, which is what, I want to be honest with you, I picked this book because originally I thought it was a graphic novel. So no, it was not. That's what I thought originally.

00;57;39;12 - 00;57;52;07

Bliss

[BLISS] Well, can I talk about covers for a minute? Part of what... I don't think I would have read this book if it had not been recommended to me because I do not like the trend of the romance novels looking like this.

00;57;52;07 - 00;57;54;18

Diane

[DIANE] The cartoony, like...

00;57;54;21 - 00;58;20;10

Bliss

[BLISS] First of all, I'm like, I have no measure on how explicit a romance novel is going to be, which doesn't always influence my choice, but sometimes it does. So I don't like that, and I don't - I feel like it almost conveys that it is going to be a less serious kind of book, which made me like pleasantly surprised when I got towards the end and there was some real... like real meat.

00;58;20;15 - 00;58;28;05

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Fluff vibes... And that's part of the marketing reason for it.

00;58;28;07 - 00;58;33;21

Lexi

[LEXI] I worked with kids for many years and it really - the art really influenced if the kids responded or not.

00;58;33;21 - 00;58;55;09

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Well, I'm going to say also, there are a lot of romance novels that I've had the opposite reaction of you because I really like that fluffy kind of thing. And so I am often more willing to read them with this new cover because they're so fluffy, whereas I'll look at some of the older covers for like ones that have been republished. I'm, like, I would have never picked it up. I never would have.

00;58;55;12 - 00;58;56;29

Lexi

[LEXI] Like Fabio? Like are you talking about...

00;58;56;29 - 00;59;00;18

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Yes, yes, yes, yes. No, I'm just like, I'm not into it.

00;59;00;18 - 00;59;05;14

Bliss

[BLISS] That's so true too. I'm gonna pick up one of those books. We all like a sweaty, shirtless man in like a kilt.

00;59;05;15 - 00;59;16;14

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Yeah, I have literally seen they get republished and it goes from something like that, which I wouldn't have picked up for myself, and it's now this cutesy cover and I'm like, oh alright, I'll try it out.

00;59;16;14 - 00;59;25;15

Bliss

[BLISS] And I think both of these kinds of covers have their place. I actually think there is a much happier medium that is not being used at all.

00;59;25;19 - 00;59;27;16

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Because then I pick up stuff I don't actually maybe want.

00;59;27;16 - 00;59;29;24

Caitlin

[BLISS] Yeah, like make it match the energy a little bit, please.

00;59;29;24 - 00;59;34;17

Diane

[DAINE] Well, it's hard when I see those, like cutesy covers. I'm like, is that a YA book? I was like...

00;59;34;22 - 00;59;42;00

Bliss

[BLISS] That's also my thought too, which is why I was so delighted that they were like adult adults.

00;59;42;03 - 00;59;50;08

Diane

[DAINE] I mean, I think my cover definitely looks like a fantasy book. Or maybe it's sci fi. I feel like it's very... I love this series.

00;59;50;10 - 01;00;07;15

Bliss

[BLISS] I also think the title of this book is misleading because it's called role playing, but it does not actually happen. They play like a video game where they're fantasy characters, but they don't play any RPGs. There's no real role playing that occurs in this novel.

01;00;07;16 - 01;00;10;12

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] It's not like a MMORPG or like where...

01;00;10;12 - 01;00;12;08

Bliss

[BLISS] I don't know what that means.

01;00;12;10 - 01;00;16;15

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Massive multiplayer online role playing game.

01;00;16;15 - 01;00;27;04

Bliss

[BLISS] I mean, I guess it is. There's no point at which they're like actually pretending to be other people. Even the like, gamer stuff falls off about halfway through the book once they've actually met in person.

01;00;27;07 - 01;00;30;08

Diane

[DIANE] You would know if they were doing theater, obviously.

01;00;30;10 - 01;00;50;19

Bliss

[BLISS] Yeah, it wasn't theater. Like no real definition of role playing actually occurs in this novel, unless it's like referential to the roles that we play in life. Maybe I'm just not thinking about it enough. Maybe I'm the problem. I redact everything I just said.

01;00;50;22 - 01;01;04;20

Diane

[DIANE] I wanted to ask you real quick - this is the last thing, sorry - about the manga. I've tried to read some manga, and I feel like a lot of it is very like, like very excitable. Is that what that was like? Was there a lot of excitement? Was, like, am I reading the wrong manga?

01;01;04;23 - 01;01;09;25

Lexi

[LEXI] It's diverse. Not always, but there is definitely a style that wasn't for me.

01;01;09;27 - 01;02;12;01

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] You're right. I'm also flipping through, and I know exactly what you were talking about because I'm like... I think a lot of the times the reactions are exaggerated. So... I'm looking at a panel right now, and she's just embarrassed that her new husband, has found her stash of gay romance novels that she just read. And so she's, like, bent over, she's holding her head, and she's very it's very overreacting. I think it's just to get the emotion kind of across. I think it is a style that kind of comes through. I always found it really funny and cute. And so I've, I've read so much... I've been reading manga since I was 11. But I do think that it is common, I think that there are some manga though that don't do that and that take it - I don't want to say take themselves more seriously, but like - they're not necessarily going to play into that they need to show the overreaction in one way or another. So they do exist.

01;02;12;01 - 01;02;27;14

Diane

[DIANE] I'm going to give it a try. I'm definitely going to give it a try at least. I put all the books on my list. That was our last podcast for 2024. We will have a new season coming up. And new season, new year. I think we did a great job. Thank you everyone.

01;02;27;14 - 01;02;28;14

Bliss

[BLISS] Thank you, Diane.

01;02;28;14 - 01;02;37;00

Caitlin

[CAITLIN] Thank you for hosting, facilitating it.

01;02;37;02 - 01;02;57;00

Voiceover 2

[VOICEOVER 2] Thank you for joining us today. Be sure to visit the Ocean County Library's website for more podcasts and events. All the titles mentioned in today's episode can be found throughout the Ocean County Library for free with your library. Until next time, happy reading!

01;02;57;02 - 01;03;27;09

Voiceover 4

[VOICEOVER 4] Hello adventurers! If you enjoyed this content, please take a look at the Ocean County Library's new podcast called Forge Your Imagination: A Guide to Immersive World Building. This new podcast is dedicated to helping creative individuals design their own expertly crafted worlds for books, games, Dungeons & Dragons, and more. Tune in on the first Wednesday morning of every month to learn more. Thanks for listening and safe travels, adventures.