

## The Library Coven (fka JK, It's Magic)

### Episode 38: *Bruja Born* by Zoraida Córdova

**transition** [00:00:13] [jaunty harpsichord and string music plays]

**jessie** [00:00:13] Hello! And welcome to JK, it's Magic, a bi-weekly podcast in which two bookish besties discuss mostly YA fantasy through the lens of intersectional feminist criticism. Why? Because critique is our fangirl love language. And because talking about books is pretty magical.

**jessie** [00:00:28] I'm Jessie.

**kelly** [00:00:29] And I'm Kelly. And this episode, we're back in Brooklyn de la Brujas and we are talking about *Bruja Born* by Zoraida Córdova, the second novel in the in the Brooklyn Brujas series. Right? That's what it's called?

**jessie** [00:00:43] Yes.

**kelly** [00:00:44] After a tragic accident, Lula betrays the mysterious Dea de la Muerte by accidentally creating a horde of "casimertos," which is a portmanteau that means almost dead in Spanish. In doing so, Lula traps Lady de la Muerte between Realms and throws off the balance of like the whole universe, so like NBD. And the Mortiz family teams up with and some new characters to un cluster fuck the whole situation. Dot, dot, dot. For now, dot, dot, dot.

**jessie** [00:01:15] So our call to action this week, thinking about the character Nova, who is experiencing homelessness throughout this book and the last book, we're asking people to donate, if you can, to the National Alliance to End Homelessness and definitely educate yourselves on ways you can help in your community even if you aren't able to give money. Think about donating your time and resources that you have available to give.

**kelly** [00:01:39] We'd like to get a shout out to our new Patreon patron and Anna, hi! Hola! Bienvenidx! Thank you for joining us. If you all out there want to get a shout out in the episode, want to get your episodes early and more awesome stuff, support us on Patreon.

**jessie** [00:01:57] Initial reactions. I was so excited to read this book because I loved *Labyrinth Lost* so much—.

**kelly** [00:02:05] mmmhhmmm.

**jessie** [00:02:05] —Yeah, it was so good! but I wasn't sure I would like it as much because Lula was my least favorite of the Mortiz sisters. She just seems like kind of vain and like typical older sister, which is like me. So maybe she's too much like me, and then by then I'm triggered. [kelly laughs], but I absolutely loved it. The pacing was fantastic. The stakes felt high the whole time, and Lula was a much more relatable character than I anticipated. And so now I can't wait to read Rose's story in *Wayward Witch*, which will be out by the time this episode is available to all. Um, so I'm really excited. I already preordered it. So what were your thoughts?

**kelly** [00:02:48] I appreciate both the Brooklyn Brujas series and Zoraida Cordova's storytelling prowess even more after reading up on Urban Fantasy isn't typically my favorite personally, but I love the world and the characters that Cordova has created. It was a total page turner and I say, let's definitely read the final installment for the show in our next season.

**jessie** [00:03:10] Yeah, let's.

**transition** [00:03:11] [jaunty string music plays]

**jessie** [00:03:15] Time to talk about world building in through the wardrobe. This book takes place about six months after Labyrinth Lost and it takes place in our world, whereas Labyrinth loss took place in a different world, a different realm, Los Lagos. And from looking at Wayward Witch's synopsis, it looks like Wayward Witch will— or Bruja Born will be the only book that takes place in our world. So like you kind of mentioned up top, we this is like the only one of them that's going to be urban fantasy, I guess, because it's the only one we get set in this world. But I thought it was like kind of fun to see them like traveling through Brooklyn and like going all over the city like it was cool.

**kelly** [00:03:53] Yeah, I thought it was cool to let, like, the author flex that they could do urban fantasy, too, you know.

**jessie** [00:03:59] Yeah. And I actually think that Córdoba's got a short story coming out in the in a compilation called Vampires Never Get Old, which I think is a bunch of like black, indigenous and people of color writing vampire stories.

**kelly** [00:04:16] So I want it! I want it already.

**jessie** [00:04:18] Yeah, it looks really cute. And I already preordered it because I'm on a book buying binge apparently right now. So yeah, other books like other fantasy styles to get to see from this author.

**kelly** [00:04:34] Shout out to the map in this book, it's kind of along the same lines, but I love the legend and the geography that we saw on a smaller scale, like a local scale that we don't really see in the non urban fantasy that we read. We see more of those like larger epic scale, large maps. So I love the map. I thought it was like super cute and also very helpful.

**jessie** [00:04:58] Which is also funny, I don't I feel like we often don't get those maps and urban fantasies, probably because we're like, well, it's in Brooklyn, you can, like, look it up or whatever. But it is helpful because I imagine, like, this neighborhood isn't exactly the same as a real neighborhood in Brooklyn and that sort of thing.

**kelly** [00:05:13] Mm hmm. I love the sensory world building in the novel with all the teas and the tinctures and the different potions and then also the baking. Have we talked about baking on the show? I don't recall, but that's something that we both love to do.

**jessie** [00:05:29] Yeah, I was like, really excited when they were in Nova's Grandmother's bakery. I was like, this is so exciting. But also she, like, poisons people for, like, as a side hustle, I guess. [both laugh] So I was like, don't eat anything there. You guys like she's going to kill you.

**kelly** [00:05:46] I'm sorry if you didn't think I thought about you immediately upon meeting that character, I would say she's baking, she's a spinster, She poisons people. She's got like long, dark, painted nails like I love it.

**jessie** [00:06:02] Yeah. Although I do have to say now that, like, I'm baking at least once a week sometimes like up to three times a week, I have short nails because they kind of just get in the way when you're trying to like knead dough and mix things by hand. It's kind of a pain in the ass to have to clean that.

**kelly** [00:06:19] So. Right. You need like a brush or something.

**jessie** [00:06:22] Yeah, it's too much work. Too much work.

**transition** [00:06:23] [jaunty string music plays]

**jessie & kelly** [00:06:27] Wands out!

**kelly** [00:06:28] Let's discuss all things magic. We're back with the Deos, the cantos, there's recoil from practicing magic. There's blood, magic. And with all of this, I'm just reminded how thoroughly developed the magical system is. And I think that's really commendable.

**jessie** [00:06:44] Yeah, we get like a lot of different people throughout this book. We meet a shapeshifter and a vampire. And whatever Rhett is, I'm assuming we will learn more about him in the future. But we learn that the medical world is much bigger than just the projects. And that kind of reminds me like the way of thinking about the recoil, because we actually meet another witch like not a bruja, but a witch. So there's like a distinction between those two things in the book. So I do wonder if, like, the witches have the recoil that the brujas have. I just wonder, like, what's the differentiation between their magic? So I thought that was interesting and I hope to learn more about that maybe in future books.

**kelly** [00:07:31] Yeah, I didn't think about the differentiation in their magics. I more thought of it as because I know Lula and the Mortiz sisters, like basically if they're called a witch, they consider it a slur because there are brujas, you know.

**jessie** [00:07:44] Yeah.

**kelly** [00:07:45] So yeah, I'm just curious if the differences are beyond like ethnic, cultural, racial.

**jessie** [00:07:53] Yeah. Because I'm kind of assuming they also have like different deities, maybe even or maybe there and there are no deities with the witches, whereas the brujas do have those. So I'm kind of interested just to learn about that because I just also finished Cemetery Boys where it's what it's called. Yeah, that's what it's called. Where they also found witch to be a slur as opposed to like brujex. So it's interesting to see that and I don't know that much about bruja in general.

**kelly** [00:08:21] So maybe we can do some research for the show notes. That would be fun.

**jessie** [00:08:26] Yeah, for sure. We also learn more about these other secret magical organizations that are going on, we have the Thornhill Alliance and the Knights of Lavant,

which are also referred to as the hunters. And I don't know how to feel about them, like I think the Thornhill Alliance might be OK. They seem to be helping with that. What's that guy's name now? I forgot. I want to say his name is like Kyle, but. Oh, McKay.

**kelly** [00:08:52] McKay [laughs]

**jessie** [00:08:54] I just remembered the "-ky" part. And then Rhett is one of the hunters who we who have done really bad things in the past are like magic police and like, you know?

**kelly** [00:09:05] They reminded me and reminded me very much of like Matthias. From Leigh Bardugo, those series.

**jessie** [00:09:12] Oh, yes, but then a Hunter type thing, yeah, but then they turn out to kind of be OK, like they're trying to make sure that like the magical like almost like the men in black, like trying to make sure that, like, the normals don't find out about, you know, everyone else, like all the magical stuff going on.

**kelly** [00:09:30] Mhm. Yeah. I'm just like skeptical. I'll talk about this later. But law and order discourse, I'm kind of like, mmm no gracias. Oh, I enjoy I enjoyed learning more about Rose's gift of the veil in this book than we— we were very concentrated on Alex and what it meant to be an encantrix and everything in the first book. So I love seeing more of Rose. She's just funny and adorable. And turns out she's also a magical hacker, which is really cool. And this reminded me of the centers and Children of Virtue and Vengeance [by Tomi Adeyemi] did you think about them?

**jessie** [00:10:06] That's funny, I did not think about it at all. All I could think of was like that Rose is always cold. And I was like, Oh, I'm always cold. Maybe I can see dead people as well like that be pretty cool.[kelly laughs] I cannot. But yeah, I was really excited to learn more about Rose and I guess it makes sense because in Labyrinth Lost like we are, like the whole family is like in Los Lagos in that tree of life, I think that's what it was called. So they're like kind of captured by The Devourer. So it was kind of interesting to see, like, these family interactions that we could not have gotten in the last book. So it was fun to see Rose and like even the parents, to some extent, even though they were sometimes doing like I'm like, why are you all even you know, someone's after you guys right now?

**kelly** [00:10:49] Right.

**jessie** [00:10:49] Like, maybe you're like one of you should stay.

**kelly** [00:10:53] I guess technically their mom is like the extent of the health care system for magical beings in the tri state area. So that's like a lot of pressure.

**jessie** [00:11:05] Well and I'm guessing or some of it might be that she's doing things that like maybe the hunters are not on board with. So she's kind of like helping people on the like, DL, you know.

**kelly** [00:11:17] Mmhhmm. Yeah.

**transition** [00:11:17] [spellcasting sound]

**jessie** [00:11:20] Lady de la Muerte takes years off Lula, Alex and their dad's life to make up for the lives Lula cost people. And I felt like this was kind of justified. What did you think?

**kelly** [00:11:31] Agreed. I thought it was fair.

**jessie** [00:11:35] Yeah, like a lot of people died because of what Lula did, and I feel like a lot of times in like movies and TV shows and especially like superhero stuff, there's like no repercussions for all the lives that are lost because like all these people, like, I know they're trying to save the world, but you killed a lot of people. I guess this is kind of the premise of civil war, of, you know, Captain America: Civil War, like they did all that bad stuff. Like they did help people, but in the process, a lot of people died. And like, what are the repercussions for, like, vigilantes who do that? I'm Team Cap. So I'm like, "no, don't sign those accords." Like, we're not teaming up with the government. But, you know,.

**kelly** [00:12:12] Obviously.

**jessie** [00:12:15] [laughs] Obviously, we have to save Bucky at all costs.

**kelly** [00:12:18] And we are definitely on the side of America's ass.

**jessie** [00:12:22] Yeah. Oh, my God yeah. [laughs].

**kelly** [00:12:25] There's going to be a gif now! yeah there is, yeah there is. [both laugh].

**jessie** [00:12:29] Check out the show notes for gifs of Captain America's ass.

**kelly** [00:12:33] I think we I promise that there will be at least four.

**jessie** [00:12:36] At least four. OK, you're not even editing this!

**kelly** [00:12:39] I know! That's why I said it [laughs].

**transition** [00:12:45] [jaunty string music plays]

**jessie** [00:12:48] Now we're going to talk about conflict villains and good versus evil in our segment, "Get Me Kylo Ren!" So we have zombies in this story. We don't get zombies in a lot of our books. So they're they're casimuertos, which are really, very zombies, but they're very zombie like zombie adjacent.

**kelly** [00:13:07] Agreed. They're like parasites, you know, because Lula is the host basically.

**jessie** [00:13:12] Mm hmm.

**kelly** [00:13:13] And that thing gets like a ripped out of her chest. That was hardcore.

**jessie** [00:13:17] Yeah. and gross.

**kelly** [00:13:21] Also, that [both laugh]. I was not really expecting zombies, honestly.

**jessie** [00:13:28] I don't know what I was expecting, I I am very interested by this kind of zombies because they never really died, I guess. So it was very interesting and a different like take on that genre to make the host such an important part, like the person who started the casimuertos to make them like such an integral part of the story of the of the beings.

**kelly** [00:13:55] Definitely. And whenever there's, like zombie talk afoot, it brings up the issue of contagion and makes me think about all the emotions that makes us feel fear, anxiety, et cetera, et cetera. That feels pretty prescient at the moment with our current pandemic and. Multiple pandemics, I should say, of racism and covid-19.

**jessie** [00:14:24] Well and especially when you see them like they're at the Thornhill Alliance and they're like looking at the map and kind of showing like if we don't contain this now, like this is how it grows.

**kelly** [00:14:34] yeah.

**jessie** [00:14:34] And when you talk about, like New York City kind of being like one of the epicenters of the pandemic, like the current covid-19 pandemic, you kind of see like these things happen very quickly, and especially when we don't have all the information we need about what's going on and what's going to protect us. So, yeah, definitely very prescient to the current moment.

**kelly** [00:14:58] I put Thornhill Alliance and Knights of Levante in our Kylo Ren section because I'm skeptical, like I said earlier, of the law and order, anything. Thornhill Alliance had like a whole Panopticon surveillance system, which seemed like very like Prism to me, surveillance state, the US surveillance system. And that just like grossed me out. So I don't know. I'm skeptical both of these organizations and people affiliated with them.

**jessie** [00:15:25] Yeah, I guess the Thorn Hill alliance is like super Men In Black-esqe now that I'm thinking about it, because like, you know how in that movie, like in the first movie, they're like watching the keeping track of all the the aliens in that movie, just like keep track of them and make sure they're not doing anything they can't be. But that's exactly what's happening here. But just like with all the magical beings and like Rhett knows all the movements of the like Mortiz family, but he's like watching them. I mean, he's kind of stalker ish, actually, now that I think about it.

**kelly** [00:15:53] Yeah. It's like, no, I don't want your, like, weird flowers, What?

**jessie** [00:15:58] I would take them. They sound really beautiful, but.

**kelly** [00:16:00] I mean, yeah, but like I don't know, seems like a grooming sort of thing. It was weird. I I think that the novel is also kind of talking about how accidents slash. The idea that just shit happens as like a force driving the conflict, that's kind of what the whole bus situation seemed like to me. And the impulse to upset the balance or to, which I'm also skeptical about because like who decides what the balance is, you know?— but that's what's wrong. The impulse to control the outcome and not death itself. So I don't know what you thought about this.

**jessie** [00:16:45] Yeah. I mean, it's kind of difficult to think about because I guess technically, Lady De la Muerte, I think she she knows when people's people are supposed to die. So I guess it's also kind of like a, it it's like predestined almost, and like Lula has

messed up that predestined, that's – that predetermined– Lula has messed up that predetermined cycle. So I guess really it's her that decides. But yeah, I don't know. Yeah, that is interesting to think about like who is deciding what's wrong? I mean, just don't bring people back from the dead, it's always a bad idea.

**kelly** [00:17:29] It never goes well, ever. When has it ever gone well?

**jessie** [00:17:32] I don't know. Yeah, never.

**kelly** [00:17:36] I just think the novel is like talking about several times that makes comments about. How a world without death is stagnant. You know how it's necessary for this product, this, you know, the cycles of change to keep going on and yeah, I just don't know how to feel about that right now.

**jessie** [00:17:56] Well, especially in a world that like in this in this world, like vampires exist. So Lady de la Muerte, seems like very annoyed with the fact that Frederick exists.

**kelly** [00:18:09] [laughs] that's true. Yeah.

**jessie** [00:18:10] She's like kind of like calling him out as if like, I don't know. But like, he's also like inventing things that are there to help magical beings heal. Like because like regular medicine, like people like non-magic, they call them "sinmagos," like their medicine doesn't work on the magical beings. So I think it's kind of like a like death herself would say, like it causes stagnation, but that's like a person to person thing, like some people would not be happy, like would not be content to sit around and just like watch the world pass by and they would probably try and help create change within the world and make the world a better place. But obviously, some people would take that power and just like do nothing with it or do bad things. So probably depends on the person.

**kelly** [00:18:56] Yeah, I guess it reminded me of this idea of entropy and how. Like the the breakdown and decay then generates room for there to be growth, I guess. Anyway, and getting all philosophical and shit.

**transition** [00:19:16] [jaunty string music plays]

**kelly** [00:19:16] Onward medical friends! Just as one does not simply walk into Mordor, one does not simply read fantasy without talking about representations of race, class, gender, disability, et cetera, et cetera. This is our segment of our power and bodies and how they relate.

**jessie** [00:19:35] I wrote, like, absolutely nothing for this part, I'm so sorry. [laughs]

**kelly** [00:19:39] I was going to say I saw the notes this morning and there was literally nothing in the section, so great. That's great.

**jessie** [00:19:48] That's all on you. You do the work today. [kelly laughs] [jumbled]... doing it for Kelly.

**kelly** [00:19:52] That's fair. Reparations. We have a multiracial cast of characters in the series. People's skin colors are described no matter what. It seemed like, right?

**jessie** [00:20:06] Yeah, they are I would say that there were a couple instances thinking back on it, I was doing the show for Crier's War and there were a couple of instances in this book where skin color was described using food. And I don't really appreciate that. And I guess maybe authors find it difficult to do something else because, like, we have varying shades of brown going on in this story as opposed to just like white and black, you know, so it'd be good to think of some other ways to describe skin color.

**kelly** [00:20:42] Definitely, I'm sure we could find some resources about that, that people have done a lot of work on this.

**jessie** [00:20:47] Probably. Put my librarian skills to the test.

**kelly** [00:20:50] That's right! And my research skills. As Jessie talked about at the top, the most poignant thing that comes up for me in class is that Nova is currently experiencing homelessness. So that was the largest, I guess, economic disparity. That we saw in the novel, and there is seem to be some shame associated with it, which is understandable, but I thought that it was. I don't know, handled with with like empathetically, I guess.

**jessie** [00:21:27] Yeah, I think so. And nobody is blaming Nova for his situation, which I think is really important.

**kelly** [00:21:35] OK, as far as gender is concerned, Lula is described as being sexualized from an early age and this is on page six. So, I remember being struck by how early it was. "I've been aware of the women's eyes on my legs since I was far too young, the way boys in school started when they spoke to me, the way they offered me gifts," et cetera, et cetera. So this is that's on page six of the novel.

**jessie** [00:22:07] For another book that I think really deals with this at like on a larger scale for like more of the book, I would recommend, um, *The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo. That book is really good and it's like very poetry based, but it really talks about like young girls being sexualized from a young age. And I think this happens particularly within, like Black and Brown communities. Definitely something that I could say I like didn't even stick out to me in my mind when I read this, because I was like, oh, yeah, that's just normal. But now I'm realizing maybe it's something that is normal within Black and Brown communities, like people, you know, age- aging them up, you know? Or us, I don't know. I said them aging us up and sexualizing and holding us to a higher standard.

**kelly** [00:22:58] Yeah, I've heard it called adultification before.

**jessie** [00:23:01] Mm hmm.

**transition** [00:23:01] [spellcasting sound]

**kelly** [00:23:05] The team is just like rife with toxic masculinity, all the scenes, I was like, um adios, I do not need any more scenes with any of you people. Goodbye, sorry eye roll,

**jessie** [00:23:17] But. Oh, wait, which team?

**kelly** [00:23:19] The soccer team.

**jessie** [00:23:21] Oh! The soccer team.



**kelly** [00:23:22] cuz all of the soccer. It was all of the soccer players and they were like making jokes about. I don't know, being feminized or whatever, I don't know. It was just ughhh.

**jessie** [00:23:33] but very realistic. Yeah, yeah,.

**kelly** [00:23:36] Yeah, yeah, very true.

**jessie** [00:23:38] Did you want to talk about Mayri and Lula?

**kelly** [00:23:41] Hmm. Sure, we can talk about them. I think that Maggie and Lula are both characters that let us discuss how we internalize white supremacist and patriarchal beauty standards. So Mayri is the person who is glamorizing herself to because of her acne, correct?

**jessie** [00:24:01] Yes.

**kelly** [00:24:03] And we are the novel lets us know the like magic isn't supposed to be used on the self, kind of similar to what we saw with in Gods of Jade and Shadow where the Gods could use the power or... Hun Kamé couldn't use his gift of prophecy on himself? Like you're not supposed to glamor yourself. And other than the recoil is worse, I guess. So and then Lula is also getting hammered by Alex at the beginning to cover her scars. Yeah, there's just there's a lot there.

**jessie** [00:24:37] Yeah, I appreciated this because I do think that, like, the beauty standards for women are so much higher, you know, where it's like you're expected to have, like, your hair done and wear makeup and like do all the things. And it's just like, why, though? [laughs] But why? [kelly laughs] It's like frustrating. But it's also hard to like because those are so ingrained in us. I think from a young age, it's like kind of hard to break out of that. And not only that, then it puts stress on people who are like trans people to, like, live up to those expectations as well, you know?

**kelly** [00:25:13] Yeah.

**jessie** [00:25:13] So like, they sometimes can feel like they have to wear makeup or they have to present themselves in a certain way to like fit into like the gender norms, which isn't fair to them either. So, yeah, those are those are my thoughts on beauty.

**kelly** [00:25:28] The gender binary limits us all.

**jessie** [00:25:31] Yeah. Yeah. And it's it's no bueno. [chuckles]

**kelly** [00:25:35] I am a skeleton. That is my aesthetic gender.

**jessie** [00:25:40] Yeah. Yeah. [laughs].

**transition** [00:25:41] [spellcasting sound]

**jessie** [00:25:45] Let's talk about ability, body mines, et cetera.

**kelly** [00:25:50] There is so much to discuss about and deal with as far as like complex PTSD and trauma is concerned. What Lula goes through in book, one takes a toll on her

and Mak's relationship before any crash or anything, right. And Maks tells her that she's like not the same person in her fire has gone out or whatever, which is like total eye roll. And it seems like they're, you know, both unprepared to deal with what happens when a partner suffers a traumatic experience and then has, you know, for lack of a better word, recoil from that, you know, trauma basically.

**jessie** [00:26:34] Which I think is made even more difficult because Lula can't tell Maks what's going on because he is not a magical being. So he's not allowed to know. So she says—.

**kelly** [00:26:44] right.

**jessie** [00:26:44] —that there was a break-in at her house and she's like kind of shook up from that, which is also understandable. But you definitely deal with some, you know, mental health issues after something like that happens. But they're both also like children.

**kelly** [00:27:01] yeah.

**jessie** [00:27:01] So you kind of see like, you know, kids also need help dealing with their grief and traumatic issues that go on around them as much as an adult does.

**kelly** [00:27:12] mmhmm.

**jessie** [00:27:12] They probably need it more.

**kelly** [00:27:14] Yeah, and that's why I think it's really important how the book shows that the way we pathologize people for their grief. We see this with Lula after the bus accident where. There's a quote on page seventy eight where it's where her, like bruja and Brujo friends, were coming over and they were like talking to her. And they she says something to the extent of they wanted me to feel better and be better without like giving me the time or the space in order to do any of that. And that like it just so resonated with me as far as like chronic illness is concerned, you know, like, OK, get well soon. And I'm like. OK, like, that's not going to happen, but thanks? question mark you know? So I don't know if that if that resonated with you at all.

**jessie** [00:28:05] Yeah, for sure. Yeah, I do. I started following some other, um, accounts on books on Instagram related to chronic illness. And it is funny to see, like some of the things people have said to other people about their illnesses are just, you know, like the same things people say to us. And I'm just like, oh, I'm glad I'm not the only one hearing, you know? Um, so, yeah, we won't get better. So sorry. [laughs]

**kelly** [00:28:30] That's like what chronic means. Yeah, but it, like, makes ableds uncomfortable.

**jessie** [00:28:36] Mm hmm. Yeah. I mean, people don't know how to deal with those kind of things, those illnesses. So, yeah. And along that line, Lula's body has been through a lot of shit like she's been spending this whole time that we see here in this book. She has you know, she is in the bus accident and she's not healing because she's connected to all the casimuertos. And so after all of that is done and they've like saved the world, Lula's body doesn't just, like, magically get better. So she's learning to live with a body that has a different level of ability than it did before. And we kind of see that a bit at the end. I think we'll see it maybe more in the future books, actually, I don't know. I I did look up the

synopsis for Wayward Witch and it looks like it's taking place in another realm and it might just be Rose and her dad. So I'm interested about that. But yeah, she's just dealing with her body being different than it was before, and she's not like. Making a huge deal about it, like it's just a different thing now.

**kelly** [00:29:37] Yeah, it doesn't seem like she wants to fit into the box anymore. She's just like, fuck it. And I think I don't know if you felt this way, too, like eventually you reach a point where you just like, fuck it. Like, I just have to live the way I can do that.

**jessie** [00:29:52] Yeah, for sure. And I think we also see this like, um, as she stops glamoring her scar as well by the end of the book, which I was like, yeah, you're a badass. Like you were attacked—

**kelly** [00:30:04] that's Right!

**jessie** [00:30:04] —by like these creatures from another realm and from like the first book. So like do just like Own it. You're a badass.

**kelly** [00:30:13] Resources that came to mind talking about chronic pain and body acceptance and that sort of thing that I have been helpful for me are Sonya Renea Taylor's work and then also the Finding Our Way podcast, which is new, highly recommend. We'll link to those sources.

**transition** [00:30:30] [jaunty string music plays]

**jessie** [00:30:32] Finally, it's time for a segment about asexuality, sexuality, sex, romance and relationships, and sometimes we take some liberties and do some shipping of our own. Alex and Rishi are finally and officially a couple.

**kelly** [00:30:48] It's so cute!!

**jessie** [00:30:49] It wasn't like a big part of the book and we don't see them together very much. But I was just like, oh, this is I like this is nice.

**kelly** [00:30:56] It was really nice.

**jessie** [00:30:59] What are your thoughts about Rhett?

**kelly** [00:31:04] No, [both laugh] I that's I'm not into it, I'm not.

**jessie** [00:31:14] OK. Is it because he's like basically a police officer?

**kelly** [00:31:18] a cop? yeah ACAB.

**jessie** [00:31:21] Yeah.

**kelly** [00:31:23] Part of it's that and part of it is like how he was treating her at the beginning was pretty condescending and paternalistic. Lula, I mean, I was reading her. And she's like stalking her. I'm not into that. And yeah, I don't really ship Lula with anyone, I think I ship her with, like her own healing journey and maybe becoming like a badass medicine bruja or something, I don't know.

**jessie** [00:31:52] Yeah, I really like that Lula told him she's not ready for a relationship at the moment and that he, like he respected that, but also like understood that she's like not in a good place right now. So even though this book centers on Lula having tried to save Maks, none of the book, none of the books so far have been super heavy on the romance aspect like Rishi and Alex end up together and like she does, like use her power, like say she'll give up her power to save Rishi. But none of the books really focus on the romance aspect of the character's lives. It's kind of just like a side story, which is kind of cool. We obviously we do not get that very often, [chuckles] you know?

**kelly** [00:32:28] No not in this cohort of books.

**transition** [00:32:31] [jaunty string music plays].

**kelly** [00:32:31] Now we're going to talk about writing style, narration, characterization, plot structure, and basically whatever else comes to mind in the segment called Kill Your Darlings.

**jessie** [00:32:45] I was so glad for the small amount of recap that we had at the beginning, because even though we I realized we read this book not like the first book not very long ago, I had forgotten way more than I realized. Like I, I think maybe partly because we read so many books. Like it just it's like hard to keep track of what happened, in which book, at which moment. So I really, really appreciated that.

**kelly** [00:33:08] Couldn't agree more. I thought Zoraida Córdova really did an excellent job weaving in the exposition into Lula's narrative voice. It was just expertly done. It felt totally natural, like the moment like we're not talking about things. But here's what I would have thought we would have said. I just thought it was so effective and it really worked for me. There are some scenes of pretty graphic violence that I was actually kind of taken aback by. The bus crash, for example. Wow. And then also there's like a casi- casimuertos debacle on page two hundred and sixty one where I was like, OK, yeah, there's there could be I can imagine this is like an action scene, like an action sequence in my head. I was like, wow, OK.

**jessie** [00:33:52] I think because I like watch so much TV with like graphic violence and it doesn't bother me. I understand it's not for everyone like this did not even cross my mind as being graphic in any way, shape or form [both laugh] like. Yeah, I don't know, like I'm about to start the second season of the Boys comes out next week, which I'm very excited about. It's, you know, um, a comic book show, but it's like rated like it's TVM. But like, you know, it's like rated R and it's kind of graphic and stuff. And so like that doesn't bother me. But I do understand, like, this might be a bit much for some people, especially like they're eating like the zombies are like eating human hearts. So, yeah, I didn't think of it, but like, yeah. [kelly laughs]

**kelly** [00:34:41] This it a total change of topic, but the scene with Lula's dusty alter reminded me of Devi in the protagonist of Never Have I Ever, which is a Netflix show I like, written by Mindy Kaling, I think.

**jessie** [00:34:56] Yeah. And based on her life.

**kelly** [00:34:58] And you recommended that show to me. It's so funny. It's so like we're like, oh my God. Quirky and just poignant and powerful and good. I love it.

**jessie** [00:35:08] Yeah. And I think if you like Mindy Kaling in any way, shape or form, you'll like this show because like Devi does such a good job, like the actress who plays her, like does such a good job of like really getting that Mindy Kaling voice into the character. And I just like I'm like 100 percent team Paxton Hall Yoshida like for life. But he's also like the like he's also like my age, [both laugh] like he's like a 30 year old playing a high schooler. And I'm just like, oh, I love you. Yeah, I watch a show but yeah, I agree. She's like, it's funny because both of them have had like these traumatic experiences like very recently. So you kind of see how that might make you give up your, um, like spirituality or your religion or it really affects that when you think, like, there's a higher being who should be taking care of you and you feel like that they're feeling so totally get that. Um, but yeah, I also watch *Never Have I Ever*. It's so funny.

**kelly** [00:36:08] It's so, so good.

**jessie** [00:36:10] Lots and lots of representation in that show.

**kelly** [00:36:13] Tons. Love it. One more thing is that this book is full of paratext, and so, you know, I love it [laughs].

**jessie** [00:36:22] Because it's so small at the beginning because like so much of it is from, like, the their book of Cantos, like, I was just I'm fine with it.

**kelly** [00:36:31] Well, I think the author's note at the end is helpful about the information about blood, magic and stuff like that.

**jessie** [00:36:37] Mm hmm. Although I'm pretty sure that Catholics think that when they are like that transubstantiation, like when they take communion, like they literally think it's the blood of Jesus, not a representation.

**kelly** [00:36:49] Not like the Presbyterians.

**jessie** [00:36:51] Yeah. Yeah.

**kelly** [00:36:52] or the Protestants believe.

**jessie** [00:36:53] Yeah. So it did say in the in the author's note that that Catholics think it's a symbol of the blood, but they think it's the actual blood and body of Jesus Christ when they take that. Look at my my Catholicism classes coming in handy. Was raised a bit Catholic. [laughs].

**transition** [00:37:13] [jaunty string music plays].

**jessie** [00:37:14] Recommend, if you like... Um, so my two are *Cemetery Boys* by Aiden Thomas, this book comes out September 1st [2020]. So this episode will be out like the book will be out by the time the episode comes out. So if you enjoy book set in our contemporary times slash world with brujeria. Like I love, love, love that book, I got me an ARC [advanced reader copy] early.

**kelly** [00:37:39] Yeah. And then you did a you're going to do an episode, right?

**jessie** [00:37:43] Yes. Bonus episode with a friend. TBD. [laughs].

**kelly** [00:37:48] yay!

**jessie** [00:37:49] Yeah, so, yeah. Read the book, it also has trans representation and its own voices would recommend, um and *A Blade So Black* by L.L. McKinney, which we've read for the show, if you like, adventure stories that take place in our contemporary world.

**kelly** [00:38:07] And I would also add that *Dread Nation* and *Deathless Divide* by Justin Ireland if you are into a badass zombie fighting. Also, can we just take a moment and say brujería?

**jessie** [00:38:21] brujeria. Yeah, OK, thank you.

**transition** [00:38:22] [jaunty string music plays]

**kelly** [00:38:27] Before we end, it's time for real talk did making fuck, I always say this, this is not the first time I've said that. [both laugh]

**jessie** [00:38:34] Just rewrite it to say what you normally try and say.

**kelly** [00:38:36] [laughing] Oh, my God, no. Did reading this book make your perspective change in any way, or did it make you interrogate a concept or system or trend that you hadn't before?

**jessie** [00:38:46] So I just want to talk about Nova for a second. He's not a huge part of this book, like not as much as he was in *Labyrinth Lost*. But I really liked reading about Nova and like the state of family and home. So in the story we see that, um, no Nova's, grandmother tells Lula and Alex to let Nova know he can come home whenever he whenever he's ready. But she's also the person who kicked him out of his home. And we don't really know exactly what's going on with their situation. But I really enjoyed seeing the family aspect with the Mortiz family, like the sisters all together, like they were very funny, like they're all very different and well written. And like the family really embraces Nova and brings him into, like, their home space and like, you know, they're going to do a death day for him. And like they realize that like just because someone isn't your family doesn't mean they're not your family. And I really appreciated this from this book, um, because I don't think this is something we see a lot like the I don't know, the family just has really embraced him like the whole Mortiz family. And they are like trying to find a way to, like, do his death day so that he can, like, stop dying from the magic he uses, which I'm going to guess might have repercussions because *Lady de la Meurte* is like, uh, like you can't give any years off your life because you don't have enough to give.

**kelly** [00:40:13] mmhmm.

**jessie** [00:40:13] So this might really affect that and cause some other changes. I would really, really, really love a book about Nova.

**kelly** [00:40:20] yes! totally.

**jessie** [00:40:20] He's like a character. I really like him. And, um, I like this part of the book was like very heartwarming to me. I really enjoyed it, even though I don't really I don't normally go for that like heartwarming, like sentimental stuff. But for some reason there's just something about him that I was just like, I just want to, like, hug you and take care of you, like you poor baby. [chuckles]

**kelly** [00:40:43] 100 percent.

**jessie** [00:40:45] What about you?

**kelly** [00:40:49] The ten of daggers is a card that Rose pulls, a tarot card that Rose pulls on page seventy seven in a scene where I think that they're all the Mortiz sisters are together, I think with Maks and she's like doing tarot or something. And the daggers is also the 10 of swords. And I know both you and I do some tarot. We dabble. The tens in the tarot or the last of the minor arcana before the court cards. So the page, Knight, Queen and King. And so the tens are often about completion of cycles or what it takes for us to access abundance or sometimes like how we get in our own way. And the swords are a suit that's associated with air and thus also communication, thoughts, messages, brain chemistry, anxiety, etc., etc.. So the ten of daggers is kind of can imagine the culmination of what that feels like. And I personally love The Next World Tarot guide book by and deck by Christie C. Road. And this is something that she writes about the ten of swords: the ten of swords asks you to trust your pain on your suffering and don't deny yourself the care you deserve from self in the validation from your community. That validation is the route of safety. The ten of swords believes now is the time to ask your people for safety." So that's what I'm thinking about.

**jessie** [00:42:08] It really goes along with the book and maybe with our current moment as well. [laughs].

**transition** [00:42:12] [jaunty string music plays]

**jessie** [00:42:16] Thanks for listening to J.K. It's magic. We'll be back in two weeks for a discussion of A Song of Wraiths and Ruin by Rosanne A. Brown. As always, we'd love to be in conversation with you medical folks. Let us know what you think of the episode. Anything we missed or just say hi by dropping a line in the comments or by reaching out to us on Twitter or Instagram @jkmagicpod. You can post or tweet about the show using #critically reading, and you can bet and you can connect it and you can contact us via email at jkmagicpod at Gmail dot com.

**kelly** [00:42:51] You can subscribe to the show on the podcast app of your choice. And we'd really appreciate it if you would rate and review its magic on whatever however you get your podcasts. And then if you had spread word to other rad people out there, if you're able to support our labor financially, you can make a one-time donation to us on coffee. You can support us monthly on Patreon, do it in exchange for mini-sodes, bonus eps, swag and much more. And now you can support the show by shopping at our bookshop dog org affiliate page, which I have just done, purchasing the giveaway winners' books! Until next time, stay magical.

**kelly** [00:43:31] Kelly is recording on Cheyenne, Ute and Arapaho Land. Jessie is recording on Peoria, Kaskaskia, Peankasha, Wea, Miami, Mascoutin, Odawa, Sauk, Mesquaki, Kickapoo, Pottawatomie, Ojibwe and Chickasaw Land.

**transition** [00:43:51] [upbeat harpsichord and string music plays]