

The Library Coven

Episode 39: A Song of Wraiths and Ruin by Roseanne A. Brown

transition [00:00:14] [jaunty harpsichord and string music plays].

kelly [00:00:14] Hello! And welcome to The Library Coven, a bi-weekly podcast in which to bookish besties discuss mostly Y.A. 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 [00:00:30] I'm Jessie.

kelly [00:00:31] And I'm Kelly.

jessie [00:00:33] And today we are talking about A Song of Wraiths and Ruin by Roseanne A. Brown, a dual POV story where we follow Malik as he attempts to kill the Princess Karina in order to save his little sister, who has been abducted by a wraith. And Karina, who is dealing with the death of her family, learning all kinds of family secrets and trying to keep the city of Zoren safe. And of course, Karina and Malik have some feelings for each other. There's a competition for Karina's hand and a marriage. Malik is kind of learning about his powers, and it all takes place during a once every 50 years festival called Soulstasia. And Malik needs to kill Karina before it's over in order to get his sister back.

kelly [00:01:12] Our call to action this week is if you're listening to this episode when it comes out, it's on Jesse's birthday, October 20th. Yeah, I said it. I said it. Everyone register to vote. You need to vote, fucking vote. And then also don't stop at voting. There are lots of other things to do. One of the things that the book talks about is anxiety, less on the societal level than it is on an individual level. Yeah, we got to take care of ourselves, too. So that's the other thing I would say.

jessie [00:01:46] You might have noticed at the top of the show that we didn't say welcome to Jaquet, it's magic and that's because we're changing the show name to The Library Coven. We're still going to talk about magical books, but we wanted a name that fit us better and wasn't associated with JKR in any way. Thank you to everyone who voted in our Instagram poll, everyone who suggested names and a special thank you to Ellie, a.k.a. Velocireader, for your excellent advice. We love the name and we hope you'll continue to be part of our show. Join the Coven on discord by becoming a patreon supporter. And you might see some link changes because everything is getting updated with our new name, but we'll keep you all in the loop.

kelly [00:02:25] Oh, one more thing about the discord. If you want to join and don't have the capacity to support us financially, that's totally fine. Just send us a heads up on social media or email and we will hook you up. Initial reactions!

jessie [00:02:44] I really enjoyed this book, we don't read a ton of books with the male POV, but I really loved Malik and how sweet he is and how close he was with his sisters. But I also really liked Karina, too. I'm excited to see how they are pitted against each other in the next book, a Psalm of Storms and Silence. And I'm happy it's a duology so we don't have to wait forever to see how it turns out. What about you?

kelly [00:03:08] I didn't know that this was a duology, so that is exciting news for me. It seems like most of the time we're reading trilogy's, if not more. So it's refreshing. I love, love, loved Malik's point of view chapters. He was so relatable and sweet, like you said. And the sister relationships love, especially Nadia. Oh, my gosh. So cute. So funny. Yeah, the character development was good. Worldbuilding was great. I'm excited to see where this goes. Let's get into it.

transition [00:03:38] [jaunty string music plays]

kelly [00:03:43] Time to talk about world building and through the wardrobe.

jessie [00:03:47] In this book, we see that promises are marked by tattoos, which really remind me of ACOTAR [by Sarah J. Maas]. I'm excited to try and learn more about tattoos and promises and if that's like something that other cultures do or if it is something that used to be done, you know, like in years past, because I thought that was really interesting.

kelly [00:04:07] Yeah, maybe we can do some research and and look up some things and put on the show notes. I'm editing, right?

jessie [00:04:13] You're editing.

transition [00:04:14] [spellcasting sound]

kelly [00:04:17] I want to shout out the gorgeous map of the world that is called Sonande. I loved all the place names and descriptions, which was nice because the last thing we did was Bruja Born, right? No?

jessie [00:04:29] Yeah.

kelly [00:04:30] But the one before that, A Curse So Dark and Lonely, I thought the place names were kind of Mal. I don't know. It's just like a small detail that I think makes a big difference. And love a map, but you didn't have the map.

jessie [00:04:42] No, I listened to the audio book, which I loved. It was really well done. And I think sorry, I've finished it like a week ago. It was like two different people doing the voices, one for Malik and one for Karina, which is really I really like that. Well, it kind of depends sometimes I like it, but this one was really well done, so I'd really recommend the audiobook. But then of course, you don't really get like the maps or any other paratext. [both laugh].

transition [00:05:05] [spellcasting sound]

kelly [00:05:10] Solstasia, this big festival, was definitely a cornerstone of the world building a lot of the plot action revolves around this central event. I liked how it was a classic X number of challenges trope that was moving the plot forward and giving a structure for the novel. But at the same time, it was much more than that. So it was just helpful, I guess, as a reader for me to organize like, OK, this is how is maybe this should have gone in Kill your darlings, who cares? Whatever. But I think that was just helpful for me to then, like, latch other parts of the world building on to that central structure.

jessie [00:05:47] Yeah. And I had like hunger game vibes to me. Like I feel like if you liked Hunger Games. Well, I guess Hunger Games is like one big thing. But either way, for some reason it gave me like Hunger Games vibes to like, see the challenges and that kind of thing, which was kind of cool because, like, it's been a while since I read Hunger Games.

transition [00:06:04] [spellcasting sound]

kelly [00:06:08] There's a whole hidden Necropolis City, which is so cool. I did not really expect that, although maybe I should have seen that coming, because there's a lot of like cities built on top of ruins, built on top of cities and that sort of thing. I love one of these little mysteries put in there. It reminded me a lot of the episode of Lovecraft country that I watched last night. There's one of them in the series plays with this adventure novel, Indiana Jones and Lara Croft, Tomb Raider type tropes that we've really only seen on the big screen, at least adapted by white people and colonizers. Yeah, this just gave me like it was just so good. It's like kind of scary and creepy and with the, like, petrified bodies and stuff like that. Very much so good. Very seasonal.

jessie [00:06:55] Yeah. I didn't see it coming at all. Like I didn't even think of that. It was a little creepy. I mean it kind of made me think of like ancient Egypt, like pyramids and stuff which I used to love when I was a kid.

kelly [00:07:06] Saaame! So interesting.

jessie [00:07:07] Yeah. Did you want to talk about the non-magical creatures?

kelly [00:07:11] Oh yeah. We could talk about those, except that I love when the worldbuilding extends to like non humans. Also, we had in this book a lot of non-magical and incredible creatures like the Chipekwe, which is like an enormous rhino thing, I think that was bred to hunt elephants. There's also these jungle walrus type things called Dingokeks and then a Serpopard, which was in the Necropolis City, which is like serpent and leopard and also very big. That just reminded me of like the lionaires in the snow leoponaires from Children of Blood and Bone [by Tomi Adeyemi]. I love this sort of stuff.

jessie [00:07:47] Yeah, I do kind of wonder, like thinking about how it was similar to the children of blood and bone. If, like, some of these come from like like West African folktales. Um, I like the idea of that, although I don't know if it's true. Something for Kelly to research. [laughs]

kelly [00:08:02] I was doing a little bit of pregaming for the episode trying to find information about the Aubusson, which is the serpent type that a deer is. I got part of the way there and it looks like there are connections to like West African culture. But I'll do some more digging and put information in the show notes.

jessie [00:08:20] Perfect.

transition [00:08:20] [jaunty string music plays]

jessie & kelly [00:08:26] Wands out!

jessie [00:08:27] Let's discuss all things magic, we have wraiths, magical creatures and necromancy in this book. I think I tie the Wraiths to like an ember in the ashes and

probably will forever now because I think it's the first book I read with them in it. [both laugh] Kelly mentioned the magical creatures and then Karina is like she's like found this Book of the dead. I think that's what it's called. I don't remember. But she's like wants to bring back her sister. At first she's like, I wish I or she wants to bring back her mom, who is the queen, so that she can deal with all the bullshit going on so that.

kelly [00:09:00] There's a lot of court intrigue, too, going on. We forgot to mention that.

jessie [00:09:03] Yeah. But then in the end, that guy whose name I don't remember brings back her sister, Hanaane. And it was funny because, like, once we started to get to the end, I was like, oh, trust this guy. Like, something seems weird. And then like two seconds later, he was like, I'm bringin' back your sis!

kelly [00:09:18] You're going to be a zombie sister now. Surprise!

jessie [00:09:20] Yeah, yeah. Zombie sister. Dang. We're getting a lot of zombies coming around like.

kelly [00:09:26] mmmHmm!

jessie [00:09:26] Like the casimueptos in Bruja Born [by Zoraida Cordova].

kelly [00:09:28] Yeah.

jessie [00:09:29] Maybe zombies are where it's at right now, you know? Sorry, vampires. [both laugh].

transition [00:09:33] [spellcasting sound]

kelly [00:09:37] Afua was this really pivotal character just coming in with all the knowledge. She had a lot of the like magical system info dump roles. She was explaining what Nkra, Nkra is, which is like a web of energy. It kind of reminds me of chi. And zawenji and ulraji are the two types of magic. And then people are like channeling Nkra when they do that magic. Right. Am I explaining this right?

jessie [00:10:06] I think so. Sometimes once it's been a little while since I read the book, everything starts to leave my mind and make space for the next book. So [laughs].

kelly [00:10:14] It is on page 213 and 215, one of these big info dumps that tells you a lot about how the magical system works. I thought that was really helpful and maybe would have been a little bit helpful earlier on or maybe like having a glossary because I found I was like, ulraji tel Ra I kind of forget what they are. I don't know. There was a lot of specific vocab, but you just pick it up as you go along.

jessie [00:10:37] And Afua, that was a little girl, right?

kelly [00:10:39] Yeah. She was like 11 or something.

jessie [00:10:41] I thought it was also cool to get all that information from, like a child because we normally see them as like not really having much knowledge to give to people. So I thought that was pretty cool.

kelly [00:10:50] Very good point.

transition [00:10:51] [spellcasting sound]

kelly [00:10:54] We got a little bit of a reveal at the end that the Sentinels so these like elite fighters who have been really kind of like a terrorism task force throughout the novel are zawenji that are forced to fight, that are like conscripted into the army or whatever for the for Zahran.

jessie [00:11:13] But also like magically, they don't seem to have a choice.

kelly [00:11:16] Mm hmm. Right.

jessie [00:11:17] Yeah. OK,.

kelly [00:11:18] Like they're forced to do it. They have no other choice in theory. I don't know. We'll see. I think we'll see more about that because I'm sure that they'll be a part of the fighting force that Fareed and Hanane...Hanane?

jessie [00:11:30] Hanane

kelly [00:11:30] OK, thank you, Hanane will be using in the next book. So we'll see.

jessie [00:11:34] If Hanane even like takes Fareed's side. Like part of me. I know she's like back from the dead, so I don't know how that will change her personality. And I assume it will in some way, because that is like the way that things work. It'd be cool if Hanane didn't take Fareed' side.

kelly [00:11:47] Yeah.

jessie [00:11:47] We'll see.

transition [00:11:48] [spellcasting sound]

kelly [00:11:50] What do you think about, like the the way of organizing the magical system that each day has a deity and then your alignment determines how you get how you, like, use magic? And what do you think about that?

jessie [00:12:02] I thought that was really cool. I think the medical system is like kind of expansive. So like I think for it being book one, it's like kind of hard for me to keep it all in there where they're supposed to be in my head. But I mean, like all fantasy, I think you just kind of let go with it and you kind of pick things up as you go along or maybe on a reread you kind of like, oh, I didn't realize this or I didn't realize that. But it kind of reminds me of like Greek and Roman mythology, you know, like those kinds of things or Norse, I guess even. I thought it was pretty cool. I think it would take me a while to, like, get the hang of it because I can barely remember my Greek and Roman gods. But [kelly laughs] I kind of like it's kind of like that. Or like the Orisha in Children of Blood and bone or the Orisha in real life. There's just a lot of them to learn, which is maybe why people like move to monotheism, because they're like, I can't keep track of all these different people, let's just keep track of one [both laugh]. But I definitely like a world with lots of different gods and deities and stuff I think is way more interesting.

kelly [00:12:58] Agreed, agreed, agreed. I did some research because I can't help myself on English day names on origins, if you're interested. Here's the scoop. Sunday self-explanatory. Monday comes from Moon-day. You can tell because Luna in Español, Luna = Moon. Tuesday in Spanish, it's Martes. So it's for the Roman deity, Mars. And to you is the Germanic deity of war. So both of them are war deities. So that's Tuesday. Wednesday, if you go to the French Mercredi, you can see that it's that comes from Mercury, aka Hermes. And then Woden in the Germanic tradition, who is also Odin, so that became Wednesday, Thursday in Spanish, it's jueves for Jove Jupiter, whatever. Also Thor's day, Friday viernes for Venus. It's also Frig and Freya in the Norse and Teutonic traditions. So that became Friday and finally Saturday for Saturn, a.k.a. Cronos. So there you go.

transition [00:14:00] [spellcasting sound]

kelly [00:14:03] The last thing that I want to mention about the magical system is that I think we've read enough fantasy by now to know that there's always more to those magical deals than the characters expect. Like if you're going to do a deal with a magical creature, be it a fairy or a Wraith or whatever, you better be. Expect the unexpected.

jessie [00:14:21] Yeah, it's funny. Every time I see this, I'm like, haven't you ever read a fantasy book before, guys?! [kelly laughs] Like this isn't going to turn out how you think it will. But then I'm like, oh yeah, of course they have it. Like that would kind of ruin the book. Although I would love to see a book about someone who has read a ton of fantasy and they're like, this isn't going to happen the way I think it will. I cannot. I guess it's kind of Alice from A Blade so Black [by L.L. McKinney], like she's like Frodo going to Mordor or whatever she's always like about the has all this like, like knowledge about like movies and pop culture and stuff. So she's kind of like, I don't know if I trust what I want to be. I don't don't make deals with the devil, you guys. It doesn't work out in your favor.

kelly [00:15:02] Or we prepared for it to not work out.

jessie [00:15:05] Yeah. Or it's like with fairies, like you got to think about how they would think of things like, you know, like if they're like, you know, so you have to like yeah. You just have to be like very clever.

kelly [00:15:15] It's like lawyers and politicians and shit.

jessie [00:15:17] Oh my God. I bet a lawyer would be so good at making these deals. I'd be like get me the best lawyer so I can make this deal with this wraith real fast. [laughs]

kelly [00:15:28] It reminds me, I used to watch Suits [tv show] which like Meghan Markle!! Yeah. So like I knew of her, I loved her,.

jessie [00:15:35] I never watched it, But yeah

kelly [00:15:36] Then I was like, oh my God, you're marrying who? And then, oh, my God, you're leaving because you're way too good for them. Yes, you are, Megan, anyway.

jessie [00:15:47] Well, and because Harry's far away enough from the throne that he can just leave. So let's not forget that there are lots of rules in place that could have kept him there if Kate and William didn't have as many children as they do.

kelly [00:15:59] That's a good point. Our resident royal expert here.

jessie [00:16:02] You're welcome. I'm really excited for the next season the crown, just so you all know.

kelly [00:16:06] Baby Laine [jessie's cat] Did I hear her jingle?

jessie [00:16:08] Oh, you might have. She's like, I can't show you because it'll make too much noise. But she's, like cleaning herself right now. So cute.

jessie & kelly [00:16:15] Wands away.

kelly [00:16:21] Now we're going to talk about conflict villains and good, evil, et cetera, et cetera in our segment, Get Me Kylo Ren!

jessie [00:16:27] I like this story, has a lot of villainous people, but to kind of stand out the most and that's Fareed who we didn't know was a villain until the very end. And Idir, who kidnaped Nadia in order to get Malik to agree to kill Karina. Kill is in quotation marks, because I guess he didn't need to kill her. He just needed to like stab her?

kelly [00:16:45] Again, the semantics. the the magical details of semantics.

jessie [00:16:50] Yeah, it's hard with Idr because I don't really know what's going to come of that character. Like it seems like he was tricked by, like generations past of Karina's family. So I don't really know if he's a villain or if he's just like trying to, like, work out his shit with these people. Like, I mean, basically it's family drama.

kelly [00:17:07] Yeah, it is.

jessie [00:17:09] But Fareed I did not see it coming until the very end when he is like taking Korina and Tunde to like, be like locked away for like their safety, their safety is in quotation marks. I started to be like, this seems suspicious, like something seems weird here. And then he's like, killin Tunde in and I'm like, what the fuck?!

kelly [00:17:27] yeah!

jessie [00:17:28] didn't see it coming.

kelly [00:17:31] I started distrusting him earlier on in the book. I was like at one point she was it was something about, remember when the commander was like, don't tell anyone. And then at one point in Karina's exposition, several chapters later, she was like, but Fareed wasn't anyone. And I'm like, that means he's the person. Like, that's it.

jessie [00:17:50] Shoulda seen it coming.

kelly [00:17:50] Like, I was like, yep, he hits him, especially when the rest of the council, like that whole scene with the council and the poisoning or maybe not poisoning. Very Princess Bride.

jessie [00:17:58] That was so badass. loved it.

kelly [00:18:00] There. Just so many little things, gems to talk about.

jessie [00:18:04] Yes, definitely.

kelly [00:18:06] I think the villain to your point is that kind of depends on the perspective, because Idir, we find out, was tricked by the Kalahari, Carina's ancestor. She killed her baby in order to create the barrier to keep Ziran safe, quote unquote. But it's like safe for whom? We've seen how people who aren't from Ziran are treated within the walls of Ziran. So it's like this idea of safety and who you're going to do it for is something that we have to question a lot more, I think. And so than a deer who is like the father of this child. And so he didn't agree to that. And when but then he is the person who's like the villain of the story of the faceless king. He says this at one point and in the novel. Right. Like she killed her baby. And I'm the villain of the story sort of thing. So it does really depend on your perspective and this novel for sure. What do you think?

jessie [00:18:55] Yeah, I definitely agree. I'm like, now that you say that, I'm like, oh my gosh, this is going to be like a Rhysand character. Am I going to be in love with him in the next book? [kelly laughs] I mean, probably not, because it also seems like so it seems like now if I'm remembering correctly, Malik is with Fareed and Fareed is going to like teach him some stuff now at the end. And is Karina with Idr now? Like like they swapped allegiances.

kelly [00:19:22] No. Idir is trapped in Malik's mind. So Malik is possessed.

jessie [00:19:26] Oh Right, right, right.

kelly [00:19:27] Slash is like cohabitating his body with the spirit. And they're with Fareed and they're both part of the Ulraji tel Ra who were like this sorcerer guild that worked for the Kennouan empire, which were the pharaohs that had slaves, et cetera, et cetera, and that Bahia Alahari was a slave. And she revolted. And so the whole slave revolt is what brought about the city of Ziran. I was kind of confused about this. I think we'll learn more in the next. I know we'll learn more. And I think like as we see in the next novel, as Malik is learning more about this from Fareed, I'm sure that we'll get that information as readers.

jessie [00:20:03] No, I think so for sure. I just I'm interested to see what's going to happen with Idr, because I also kind of feel bad for him because, like now Idr was like, you know, I don't think he did anything wrong.

kelly [00:20:14] He was helping her do her slave revolt.

jessie [00:20:18] Yeah. Which is like, OK, you should do that. And then, like, they killed his kid, like that. Seems like pretty fucked up. I don't know. We'll see what happens. It's also hard because, like Idr is not really the most reliable. And Fareed and I feel like that's what we're going to get a lot of information from. So we'll see what happens.

transition [00:20:37] [spellcasting sound]

kelly [00:20:40] There's also, I would say, similarly to what we talked about and Bruja Born. There's a lot of parallels actually with the zombies. So the like going against the rules of nature or magic or whatever by performing a resurrection rite. Hanane is now a lynch leech? However you pronounce that which are "Casimuertos". Basically, I guess I'm excited to see more of them in the book, too. But also another point that I think the two books have in common is that, like, accidents are what causes a lot of tragedy and trauma.

So Karin's powers sparked the palace fire that then leads her dad and her older sister like to their deaths. And so she has a lot of guilt about that. And she's repressed these memories until Fareed blows up at her and is like info dumping on her at the end. So, yeah, that's another thing that I that came to mind for me.

jessie [00:21:32] Yeah. And something that also maybe wouldn't have happened if they had been like if her mom had paid any attention to Karina and realized she had some magical powers. It reminded me very much of Frozen. [laughs] I was like if you guys had just dealt with this when it started, [laughs] it wouldn't be so.

kelly [00:21:49] -- Perhaps some radical candor. Can you can you talk about that for a second?

jessie [00:21:57] OK, so before Kelly and I started recording, we always like to chat and catch up because we don't live near each other anymore. Sad face. I don't even know how radical candor came up.

kelly [00:22:05] it was like you you said something really honest we like, "We'll see if you even finish the fuckin series you're watching" or whatever. And I'm like, "OK, yeah, you're right.

jessie [00:22:13] Yeah. yep And I called it radical candor as a joke because radical candor is just being honest with people. So I don't know why like white people had to rename it something else. [kelly laughs] I'm like, not really here for that. Like just call it honesty. That's what radical candor is, just being honest to people. So it's just like. Ugh, not reading your book. You're not making money off of telling me how to be honest with people. [kelly laughs]

kelly [00:22:36] I'd also like to be honest with whom, you know. Yeah, right. Me. So anyway,.

jessie [00:22:43] Whatever I'll be honest on the podcast. [laughs]

kelly [00:22:47] and with me about my media consumption habits.

jessie [00:22:51] Kelly doesn't finish shows.

kelly [00:22:53] I'm really liking Lovecraft country so I'm totally going to finish it.

jessie [00:22:56] Ok, We'll believe it when we see it. [both laugh]

kelly [00:23:01] One last point I think we can bring up in this segment is the raids that were going on like that just seemed like so superfluous and there were supposedly to like, quote unquote, investigate the Sultana's murder. But we really we see that they're just scare tactics to control the population. And Karina also sees this. She calls her council out on it and is like, stop. I mean, it takes her like three quarters of the book to do so, but. Her mom died in front of her, so I don't know, that's a lo.

jessie [00:23:29] Yeah, it is a lot. And I think it's some I think we also see I don't remember what Malik's people were called. Do you remember?

kelly [00:23:37] Eshrans.

jessie [00:23:38] Yeah. Like we see the Eshrans are like the like lower class people. Actually, I think we talk about this maybe later in class or whatever, but we see, like, a lot of this is affecting his people and not anyone else. They're like, Fareed is like obviously trying to start some shit with some other group of people. And it's just a wild ride.

kelly [00:23:58] Karina's also expecting she was also distrust worthy of her counsel because she thought they were warmongering. Right? Like trying to start wars outside of the borders in order to enrich themselves, which like fuck the military industrial complex also.

jessie [00:24:12] Yeah, for sure. And well, and she didn't really like once she realized that they were doing it to like Afua's people, she was like they they obviously had nothing to do with this, like what is going on. Like they've been helping me. So yeah, it's obviously like she's trying to fix it. But like the council is like you're not even the queen yet, so no. Which is probably going to be even more complicated now that Hanane is like quote unquote alive because she is actually has the right to the throne. And I guess this kind of controlled by Fareed, so I'm interested to see how that's going to play out.

transition [00:24:45] [jaunty string music plays]

jessie [00:24:51] Onward magical friends! just as one does not simply walk into Mordor, one does not simply read fantasy without talking about representations of race, class, gender and ability. This is our segment about power and bodies and how they relate.

kelly [00:25:04] Can I just mention one thing at the top of the section?

jessie [00:25:06] Of course.

kelly [00:25:07] There is actually a moment that's like one does not simply walk into Ksar alahari or something. [both laugh] So I laughed. I lol'd at that.

jessie [00:25:18] like we saw in CBB (children of blood and bone) all the characters in this book are Black, but that doesn't change the fact that oppression exists. And with Malik and his sister, we see that his people the Eshran, are the oppressed group. I really appreciate that in these books because it really points out the like. I think in the United States we really think of oppression as something that Black people deal with because, you know, indigenous and people of color deal with because they look different. But these things still happen in other countries where people look the same.

kelly [00:25:53] Right.

jessie [00:25:54] But they they just like there's other things that set people apart, which I find interesting to, like, interrogate, you know.

kelly [00:26:01] Yeah. And it's important to have that in mind, right. That we see we're seeing oppression along like ethnic and cultural and geographic distinctions or linguistic. An example of this is that Malik, Leila, Nadia can't speak their native tongue, Dajarra without being persecuted. And they have to pretend to be someone they're not. And then they also mentioned something about a quarantine, which is also gets into the like the xenophobia, you know, about refugees bringing in whatever's. When really, if you're the United States, you deport covid to Central America on your deportation flights.

jessie [00:26:35] Yeah, I yeah, I thought that was really interesting and I think we see it kind of, um, I don't know, like what the population are like in this story, but I think we also see some of this and like minority majority countries, you know, we're like the minority group is the one that's in charge. So it's very interesting. At one point, Malik is like out with the other champions and there's a raid going on, and the other champions think if Malik behaves a certain way and follows instructions, everything will be fine. Does this sound familiar at all? Just follow the instructions of the police and nothing bad will happen to you. I appreciated having this in this novel. I'm just like, uh. So over hearing that like rhetoric.

kelly [00:27:18] Yeah. And even on a more macro level, especially for people of color, like follow the rules societally, do what people in power want, and then you get proximity to power, but like not the actual thing. And Ibram X Kendi and Stamped from the Beginning calls this uplift suasion like I'm going to do things the way white people have done it in the hope that, like, I'll be exceptional or whatever as an outsider who's not white and then gain access to that sort of power. And it just like doesn't work.

jessie [00:27:51] surprise, surprise.

kelly [00:27:51] Even for white women, You know, like make a deal with the devil to get proximity to power and boom. Here we are.

jessie [00:27:57] Yeah. And then oppress other people. That's what they do.

kelly [00:28:03] yep.

jessie [00:28:04] Ooooh, Don't get me started. [both laugh] I'm currently reading Stamped from the Beginning right now. I would recommend. Pretty good.

kelly [00:28:11] Yeah!

transition [00:28:11] [spellcasting sound]

kelly [00:28:14] Talk about class.

jessie [00:28:16] Karina's status as princess and her wealth, protect her from knowing the atrocities happening to people outside the palace. So we also see this play out with karina and the power dynamics with Aminatta, her like Handmaid.

kelly [00:28:29] Mm hmm.

jessie [00:28:30] That's what they're called?

kelly [00:28:31] Ladies Maid.

jessie [00:28:33] Ladies, Mavin, I don't know. Whatever. Yeah. Whatever they're called. Yeah. She has no idea what's going on outside of, like, her circle of the rich, wealthy royal class of people, which is just like pay attention people to what's going on.

kelly [00:28:47] Very isolated. Very sheltered.

jessie [00:28:49] Mm hmm.

kelly [00:28:51] And then you see the other end of the spectrum with Malik and his family, who are poor houseless, don't have access to generational wealth. And on top of that, like centuries of oppression. Right? Like Eshrans are used for domestic labor in Iran. So the caretakers for like higher class children that you can see this on page 202. Another of those sound familiar moments.

jessie [00:29:16] Right?

kelly [00:29:16] I mean, there's just so much wealth inequity on display throughout the novel, especially with like the big festivals and everything, and there's just like so much wasting water and resources. And, yeah, just made me think of our current reality and

jessie [00:29:32] Yeah.

kelly [00:29:32] Eat the rich.

jessie [00:29:34] Yeah.

transition [00:29:35] [spellcasting sound]

jessie [00:29:38] Talking about gender, the spell that Karina wants to use to raise her mother from the dead is tied to biological sex. The like has to be a king that is used. So we see that play out when Fareed kills Tunde, like uses Tunde's blood or his death or whatever.

kelly [00:29:57] Yeah, we see the Karina's Exposition actually addresses this on page 167, like when you strategizing about like how she has to rig the competition and it actually ends up working out because then you know, who... Dedele? Is that the person who like ends up helping Aminatta at the end, one of the other champions.

jessie [00:30:16] Maybe?

kelly [00:30:17] Who did the Wakama standoff. like stand off isn't the word I'm looking for... duel? like fight.

jessie [00:30:24] Yeah. Yeah.

kelly [00:30:26] Moment. Well, then she didn't die, so that's helpful, you know. but like Tunde was a great character. I didn't want him to die either. He seemed, you know, like a person who wasn't really espousing toxic, masculine traits. I appreciated that they addressed the fact that it was super hetero normative and tied to biological sex. But like I mean, it's just the way it's not like it was resolved or anything.

jessie [00:30:51] No and I think we see this in fantasy novels that deal with, like blood magic, kind of often. or just magic in general or like, you know, we'll have like, for example, in Cemetery Boys [by Aidan Thomas], the main character, Jodrell, is his dad and family, gender him a lot. And part of that comes from obviously from the language being gendered. And so I think we see this a lot in, like, magical sorry, the language being gendered for Brujo or Bruja. But I think we see this a lot and like magical situations where some things are for girls and some things are for boys, you know, like that kind of thing. So

I'm interested to see how this might change over time as people become more aware of, like, how this is kind of like a problem.

kelly [00:31:35] M hmm.

jessie [00:31:35] But I just wanted to point it out here that I don't know. I don't I don't really like that very much, especially because it's like blood. I don't think our blood is any different. [laughs].

kelly [00:31:44] Right! That's a good point. Yeah, the heart.

jessie [00:31:46] Oh it was a heart. Yeah. So like those I mean, I guess maybe dudes have bigger hearts because, like, normally they're bigger people, like, I don't know,.

kelly [00:31:55] Like biological sex is also [laughs] we'll put stuff in the show notes about it. But yeah, I agree that this is this wasn't my favorite part.

jessie [00:32:03] Yes.

kelly [00:32:06] Malik has been fed messages of patriarchal slash toxic masculinity by his father and society at large, such as The Real Men Don't Cry narrative. We just see the like the it's super toxic and it takes a real toll on him. Let's just not do that. Gender roles hurt everyone.

jessie [00:32:22] Yeah, and I kind of forgot about this, but Malik does have like kind of like a shit. Dad, I don't know if he was like their dad was bad with, like the sisters as well. But like, I think Malik was like abuse, like he was hit as a child and that sort of thing. So, um, we also see that happening with him, just like, you know. Not not great. Don't hit your children or anyone if you can help it. Maybe some people deserve it. I mean, I guess you can punch Nazis. [laughs] Yeah, a lot going on with Malik. And I just want him to stay sweet and innocent. I just want to hug him and protect him.

kelly [00:33:02] Yeah. I just love how that tenderness is. He's like really held on to it.

jessie [00:33:06] Mm hmm.

kelly [00:33:07] This one's for the soft bois out there. Love you. It seems like there might be a more or less matriarchal power structure in Ziran, at least I noticed regular relative gender parity in the powerful positions, councils, rulers, cetera. But I don't know, it seemed like maybe that's just because they banish the faceless king and it just seems like there have been only daughters and queens. But maybe I'm making that up.

jessie [00:33:31] No, I mean, that does seem to be the case. The Kestral that's I guess the title of Karina's mom was obviously a firstborn daughter and then so was Hanane so actually maybe something will come of that in the next book. Like, why are they only having daughters? I don't know. Very interesting. But yeah, the council and stuff, it's like pretty good, I would say.

transition [00:33:49] [jaunty string music plays]

kelly [00:33:54] How about colonialism and imperialism? There's a lot to discuss here.

jessie [00:33:59] Yeah, we see Malik and his family have traveled through the OJB. I think it was actually pronounced Ojibway Desert to try and find safety. His family are refugees and we see them like with false papers to try and get work in. Ziran, I really appreciated seeing this. I don't think this is like, um, like we don't really get a story like refugee stories in our fantasy books very often. So I appreciated seeing this.

kelly [00:34:25] Yeah, not like as developed as this one. It really went into like the geopolitics of why there is migration, which is something I appreciate, because that's not something that gets brought up in discussions like irl. There's a quote on page 30 that I think will help set the stage for this conversation. Quote, Eshran hatred was nothing new to Malik. This had been the reality for his people for more than two centuries, ever since the Zirani Army had marched into the mountains to quell a war between the Eshran clans and had never marched out. The Zahrani claimed that the Astron elders had been unable to pay their debts afterward, which justified the continued occupation. The elders argued that Ziran had used the war as an excuse to steal fertile Eshran land as the Objibi grew ever more inhospitable, which is the desert. I like how it was very realistic is the wrong word, but like, I don't know, it really made a cognitive sense that it's like a war over resources and it's a imperial power coming in saying they have a claim that they don't really have pretended to be like a peacekeeper. And then.

jessie [00:35:28] Does this all sound familiar in any way, shape or form?

kelly [00:35:29] Right?! And then like then never fucking leaving! And then blaming the people who are emigrating and migrating and refugees for the problems that the empire itself created. So, yeah, the anti-immigrant xenophobia is blatant and the logical fallacies are the same as the ones we hear in real life, the lazy taking jobs, benefiting from wealth that isn't theirs. And that all just ignores the conditions that create like who created the conditions that forced people to migrate in the first place. I really appreciated how nuanced this was going off of what you were saying.

jessie [00:36:05] Yeah, the author, I think, did a really good job with these like things that we see in our day to day world, in our real world, and bringing them into this fantasy world and like talking about them, I think in a way that might be relatable to some people who don't understand the issues, who have ignored the issues or who maybe like new to the issues.

kelly [00:36:25] Excellently said. We see Tunde and Malik getting to some common ground when they're having this conversation and one day reveals that he's the RONIE and is part of this, like in spite of all his privileges, class privileges, he's also of foreign descent and they experience discrimination as well, but to different degrees. This is on page 256 and this is something Malik hadn't considered. And I think at that point is when their relationship kind of changes to like really trusting each other and working together a little bit more. I mean, obviously, that's not how it works out at the end, but. I like this moment where these two men were realizing that they had something in common.

jessie [00:37:04] And like a good reminder that like oppressed people probably like if we stick together, then maybe that is helpful in some way to, like, making change, you know?

kelly [00:37:13] Totally. Another thing like a little nugget that I thought was particularly good that the author included, just like insightful and important to talk about, is this how the cultural appropriation and erasure of original people is happening at the like Solstasia midweek party, Malik notices that one of the dances from Eshran has made its way to

Ziran, but the Eshran people themselves aren't welcome. So it's like all of these non Eshrans enjoying this dance, right. And knowing it very well that he didn't even like Mallik. That is, from this culture. It didn't really even know it and only danced it like on important occasions, ceremonies or weddings or things like that. This like showing how cultural appropriation works in this fantastical world, I think is just a very effective way to explain what it is and just be like, no, it's not OK.

jessie [00:38:02] Yeah, well, in parallel to the real world, like, I don't know in lots of ways that the long fingernails, the cornrows, braids, like all those things, curly hair, even, you know. So, yeah, those are the parallels,.

kelly [00:38:17] The music, the dancing, all of it.

jessie [00:38:20] It is very- I think the author, Rosanne A Brown, did like a really good job bringing these like things to the forefront of the novel.

transition [00:38:27] [spellcasting sound]

jessie [00:38:30] Let's talk about ability, bodyminds, et cetera, Malik can see wraiths, the grim folk, and that makes people think he's mentally ill. Part of me thinks like I'm guessing maybe the wider world doesn't realize magic is real.

kelly [00:38:43] Yeah.

jessie [00:38:44] Seems to be part of that. But ugh, poor Malik.

kelly [00:38:48] This is just so tragic on so many levels. Just like the gaslighting and its impacts. And he's a character that you can really see, especially there's a passage on page 88 where he's describing, you know, this years and years of trauma that he's accumulated and how that affects his sense of self and how he is able to access his magic. And we're seeing him, you know, gradually unlearn that and do some re-learning.

jessie [00:39:12] Yeah. We also see that both Malik and Karina are dealing with some serious, serious anxiety.

kelly [00:39:19] So relatable.

jessie [00:39:20] I feel for them. Yeah, yeah.

kelly [00:39:24] And then Malik, you know, has goes a step further and has panic attacks, too. I thought that were expressed or not expressed like represented with compassion and without judgment, which I appreciated. I'd never seen that for a panic attack before.

jessie [00:39:39] And then, like on the flip side, Korina has migraines, which we realize are part maybe part of her repressing those memories of the death of her father and sister.

kelly [00:39:49] Right. And maybe just repressing her magic in general, too, because we learn at the end that she's been she's just like buried it down really deep. And then that release, like when Malik stabbed her with the spirit blade or whatever, at the end that was like release the pent up, like, tangle of her Nkra or whatever. However, it was explained. I thought that that was really cool.

jessie [00:40:10] Yeah.

kelly [00:40:11] But like, yeah. Karina's dealing with chronic pain.

jessie [00:40:13] Mm hmm.

kelly [00:40:14] And I thought it was interesting that Malik has traditional remedies from Eshran that Karina has never heard of. So it just goes to show that, you know, indigenous knowledges are super important.

jessie [00:40:25] Yeah, for sure.

kelly [00:40:27] Also, Malique traps Idr in his mind. I didn't see this coming, I thought it was so cool. I really loved how it turned the sentiment of this "my mind isn't the most hospitable place" is something that he says at one point. And it's like it was a prison for him or how it could be like he could be trapped in his mind. And then he's literally taking that and making it work for him to trap this demon in his or wraith whatever in his mind, like, oh, my gosh, I didn't see it coming. So cool.

jessie [00:40:54] Yeah, I'm interested to see how that will turn out. Like, I feel like having another person in your head is probably not the most, like, easy thing to do or to live with. Like, how do you sleep at night? What if they just like, try and keep you up? I would like to be like get out of here and he must leave.

kelly [00:41:08] Maybe it's going to be like Klaus and Ben [from Umbrella Academy].
[laughs]

jessie [00:41:11] Yeah, I hope so.

kelly [00:41:15] Lila at one point asks Malique, how are you feeling after this whole, like, possession debacle? And at this point he's like, there's a paragraph or he's like, I'm feeling this way, this way in this way. And it's all like super shitty and overwhelming and like a mental keysmash. And outwardly, outwardly, he just tells her, I'm fine. very relatable, very relatable. [laughs]

jessie [00:41:36] I mean, sometimes you just cannot put those things into words and you're like, I don't have the time to deal with telling you everything right now.

kelly [00:41:41] Because it's going to I'm going to feel obligated to make you feel better about it. Or I am. Not You.

jessie [00:41:46] Yeah. Yeah.

kelly [00:41:47] Cuz You have better boundaries than me. [both laugh]

jessie [00:41:49] Well, I am pretty good with my boundaries, I will say. Sometimes...[.

transition [00:41:55] [Jaunty string music plays]

jessie [00:42:02] Finally, it's time for Shipwrecked, a segment about sexuality, asexuality, sex, romance and relationships, and sometimes we take some liberties and do some shipping of our own. OK, do you ship Karina and Malik?

kelly [00:42:14] Malik?

jessie [00:42:15] Oh, sorry. Do you ship them?

kelly [00:42:17] I don't -- I don't know, I maybe? I shipped them like throughout the middle of the book and then Tunde really broke my heart there at the end. Oh my God.

jessie [00:42:27] Oh interesting!

kelly [00:42:28] Yeah. He just died so valiantly, I mean, he didn't see it coming.

jessie [00:42:34] Yeah, he'd like basically just died. I wouldn't call that a valiant death. He didn't even fight.

kelly [00:42:38] Yeah he just was killed. I don't know. I don't know.

jessie [00:42:41] I don't think I shipped them at the moment. But, like, maybe that will change in the next book. They just didn't seem like very well suited towards each other. And there's like a power imbalance. And, you know, just like all that stuff like class, ethnicity, like in such a way that they like, they would really have to do have something like radical candor talks [kelly laughs] and like talk through, you know, I don't know. It just seemed like I was just like, no, I'm I'm not really here for it. I mean, Tunde was great. I don't really have like I don't really need him to, like, be with Karina or whatever. He just seemed like a really sweet guy.

kelly [00:43:15] Well, that ship has sailed anyway.

jessie [00:43:18] Well, yeah, that too. But I was just like, yeah, it's fine. He's fine. I don't know. I'm just not really here for Malik Mal Mal Malik and Karina.

kelly [00:43:29] I think the witty rejoinder rejoinders about like I've had you on your knees how many times I liked those.

jessie [00:43:34] We have a banter, but it was mostly one sided and from Karina.

kelly [00:43:40] So just like again with the power imbalance like you mentioned.

jessie [00:43:43] Mmhhmm. Yeah. I don't know that I could get over that right at the moment, but like if it's like a Rhysand-Feyre kind of thing where, you know, like Kareena makes Malik like her high Lord or whatever, I'll be on board.

kelly [00:43:58] They're both fairies.

jessie [00:44:00] Yeah. Spoiler alert for ACOMAF.

kelly [00:44:03] Spoiler alert book came out ten years ago.

jessie [00:44:06] OK, not ten years ago but still I'm just like I feel like I need to say it. But now it's too late. It's already said the things have you haven't read A Court of Mist and Fury [by Sarah J. Maas] Like you're well behind the times which is fine,.

kelly [00:44:19] But also your pandemic self deserves it. So treat yourself.

jessie [00:44:23] Yeah. Kelly can put a little spoiler alert in the show notes. [both laugh]

kelly [00:44:28] uh, funny. Karina's relationship to her mother, the Kestral of. There's a lot there. Oh my gosh. Just like the grief I guess after the fire you really see in their relationship how that separates us when what we most crave is proximity and how that is just like sometimes the people who are closest to us by our family ties are like actually the hardest people to reach.

jessie [00:44:52] Yeah, I didn't really like her like the Kestral very much. And I couldn't tell, like, how close they were before this because it seemed like Karina was probably closer with her dad.

kelly [00:45:01] Yeah.

jessie [00:45:02] But I'm also not a huge fan of parental figures in general, so I'll just like, yeah, this seems right. Parents are terrible.

kelly [00:45:10] Yeah. She really messed up. She ignored you ignored your child after a huge tragedy and that had consequences.

jessie [00:45:16] Yeah. And then she's like all pissy with Karina, but I'm like, dude, this is half your fault. You're not doing anything to help or support her.

kelly [00:45:24] Well and seemed like her mom was quasi ignoring her for Hanane anyway because she is the first born and was going to like take over the throne duties, etc..

jessie [00:45:32] Yeah. Which is like some bullshit. If the Crown has taught me anything, is that you should forget about that first born and really care about the other kids because that first child continually reminds you of your impending death.

kelly [00:45:45] Oh wow. Oh wow.

jessie [00:45:46] That's what I learned from the Crown. [laughs] Great show.

transition [00:45:50] [spellcasting sound]

kelly [00:45:54] One other thing I really appreciated that I think deserves to be in the shipwrecked section is how sibling relationships are represented with such truth and clarity in this book really made me think about this is the huge epic blowout fight that Malik and Leila have on pages 312-313 around there. And it's just like only something that siblings can do to each other. I don't know, like I've had those blowout fights with my brother before it. It's just like ooof.

jessie [00:46:22] yeah fights with siblings are just something different. Yeah. They just, like, know how to hit you where it hurts.

kelly [00:46:29] And just like no pulling punches either, I don't know,.

jessie [00:46:32] It's radical candor, [both laugh] but, yeah, I agree. I like their relationship, like, I just really enjoy their relationship as well. And like how like Laila seemed to like

come to terms with like what Malik was dealing with and like how this was probably kind of hard for him as well. Like sometimes I think when you are so close to someone is can kind of be difficult to see, like the ways that they're suffering because you think, you know, even if you don't, you know, like you're not them.

kelly [00:46:57] Yeah. We're assuming things even if we're close to people.

jessie [00:47:00] Mm hmm.

transition [00:47:00] [jaunty string music plays]

kelly [00:47:05] Now we're going to talk about writing style, narration, characterization, plot structure, and basically whatever else comes to mind in a segment called Kill Your Darlings.

jessie [00:47:13] We have a content warning at the beginning of the book. I thought this was really well done because the book, it does deal a lot. Like I can see, I don't often have panic attacks, but I can see how, like reading about them sometimes can be like very stressful. There is a Vox about, I think about anxiety, one of the Explained ones, and the person is like simulating what it's like to have a panic attack. And I started like feeling like who I don't like. Can we get this over with? Because like but that and like all the death going on, like it was just really nice to see that the beginning of the book, like, wow, I might not have needed it. You know, you like you never know who needs to see that so that they can, like, mentally prepare themselves for what they're about to read. And I thought that was really nice.

kelly [00:47:57] Absolutely. I thought this is excellent. I love when these are included at the book. It's just like, why not? It doesn't hurt. It only helps people.

jessie [00:48:05] Yeah.

transition [00:48:05] [Spellcasting sound]

jessie [00:48:09] Malik actually stabs Karina. I didn't think that would happen because in books, the characters are often reluctant about these sort of things, not Kaz but like everyone else. [kelly laughs] And I was really proud of him,.

kelly [00:48:21] Especially because the book was setting it up the whole time. Like he can't like I'm not going to do it. I won't be able to do it. And then he finally does at the end.

jessie [00:48:29] I was so proud, just like I felt like a proud mom being like, oh my God, look at my assassins' son, like I'm so proud of you. And I was just real happy because, like, a lot of times I'm like, oh, my God, why don't you just kill them? But he was, like, prepared to do the thing was in order to get his sister back. And I was just like, wow, impressed.

kelly [00:48:51] ooh Puppies. Can you hear them?

jessie [00:48:54] Yes. [kelly laughs]

kelly [00:48:55] Excellent. I found another. Smells like YA moment. Apparently people's hair smells like rain. Karina's hair smelled like rain at one moment. And I'm like, what hair

products are you using? Because I want my hair to smell like rain. I mean, I don't have very much of it, but.

jessie [00:49:12] I think rain is a very common scent that I feel like we get. And wYA books I don't know why, because I'm like Rain does have a very specific smell and I don't know what that smell is exactly.

kelly [00:49:23] Ozone.

jessie [00:49:23] But I'm like, well, that's not cool.

kelly [00:49:26] And I'm sorry. I think it is cool!

jessie [00:49:29] But I'm also like, yeah, what products are you using? How are you bottling that smell? You know, I don't know.

kelly [00:49:36] Rain very. That's a classic classic.

jessie [00:49:39] Oh, I got a cinnamon in a new book, but I think it's the smell of like the person's magic. So that's like kind of cool. Like Magic has a smell.

kelly [00:49:47] I like that! I've never heard of that.

jessie [00:49:48] Yeah, I like it, too. Legendborn [by Tracy Deonn] just loving that book.

transition [00:49:52] [spellcasting sound]

kelly [00:49:54] I never thought so much about how her how hard Wraiths is to pronounce in English until we did this episode.

jessie [00:50:01] Oh my gosh, Kelly and I have been talking about this book, and I'm like Wraith's. I feel like I have to, like, really Wraith's work at saying it. I just was like, I want to stumble through. We we we are almost done with this episode. Like, we've really made it through being able to say "wraiths" no problem, but it's like a hard it's like a difficult word. I don't know why. I think it's I like that R with the t h like it's.

kelly [00:50:24] that w-r-uh, I don't know. It just something is hard to like. I get some, I stumble around it sometimes but we've done it.

jessie [00:50:32] Yeah.

kelly [00:50:32] High five virtual high five. I think I mentioned this before, either an initial reaction or somewhere else, but there are just so many twists, especially in the last hundred pages, so good.

jessie [00:50:44] I wasn't expecting it.

kelly [00:50:45] Here for the pacing.

jessie [00:50:47] Mm hmm.

transition [00:50:48] [jaunty string music plays]

jessie [00:50:53] Recommend, if you like, an Ember in the Ashes by Sabaa Tahir. We have some similar magical creatures and I feel like kind of a similar ship. Children of Blood and Bone by Tomi Adeyemi. Similar setting in a similar ship like I think we're all a lots of enemies to lovers, which is one of my faves, even though I don't really feel like. Well, Tomi Adeyemi, I mean, that's some real enemies to lovers. Yes, but I do love that trope. It's one of my faves.

kelly [00:51:19] And I would also say City of Brass by, S.A. Chakraborty, because there's lots of mysterious lore and unearthing family history slash drama and chosen one energy.

jessie [00:51:30] And also Wraiths.

kelly [00:51:31] Also Wraiths. [laughs].

transition [00:51:31] [jaunty string music plays]

kelly [00:51:37] Before we end, it's time for real talk. Did making the making the reading this book make your perspective change in any way, or did it make you interrogate a concept system or trend that you hadn't before? Jessie...

jessie [00:51:51] It looks like Kelly has a lot of real success for this episode.

kelly [00:51:55] I May or may not have four points.

jessie [00:51:56] I don't think I had any.

kelly [00:51:57] you didn't!

jessie [00:51:59] I didn't write any down. I probably meant to think about it some more and be like, I'll have something for real talk by the time we talk about it. But I didn't. I would like to just say again that I appreciate Malik's ability to stab someone when necessary. [kelly laughs] That's all I'm going to say for real talk. I just really appreciate a character who's willing to do what has to be done, even though he might be in love with her. I mean, I don't know a little sister. I don't have a little sister. So I'm kind of like, would you really kill her for a little sister? But maybe, I don't know. He seemed to really love her. I don't really know.

kelly [00:52:32] It sounded like he raised her.

jessie [00:52:34] Yeah, that's true. So maybe you kind of feel different.

kelly [00:52:36] Yeah.

jessie [00:52:36] I probably should have said something about like raising your siblings probably in real talk, but...

kelly [00:52:43] Parentification of of children maybe.

jessie [00:52:45] Yeah. As an oldest sibling, I feel that that's all I'll say about it. It's no fun. Don't do that to your kids if you can help it. That's all I got. What are your four things for real talk? [laughs].

kelly [00:52:56] point one is about fear because this book deals a lot with fear. It is really showing, I think, that we have to look deeply at it, feel it and get curious about it instead of just repressing it or turning it into hate or wallowing in it. I guess. Point Two: a lot of this book for me brought up the importance of each person's journey and like walking themselves home. By this I mean like working to caretake our inner child. Or maybe this feels weird, but like Malik in several parts in the exposition is like reaching out to his younger self and trying to extend his current self some compassion. And that shit is hard. And I just wanted to recognize that this book represents it really carefully. And I appreciated that. Point three, the scene where Malik is weaving the tale about hyena's bag for the second challenge. I just that part I love that captures that chapter. I was just like enraptured and really caught up in the story. And it made me think about how we desperately need all the story Weavers at this moment in time. So I love reading all the books and seeing what people come up with. And last one, I promise, Hyena says on page 414, "you tell yourself down for things you could not have known or done, why punish a seed for not yet being a tree?" Just going to leave that one there for us all to ponder.

jessie [00:54:25] Thank you for coming and bringing so many things to real talk. much appreciated.

kelly [00:54:29] You're welcome. You're welcome.

transition [00:54:36] [jaunty string music plays].

jessie [00:54:36] Thanks for listening to The Library Coven. We'll be back in two weeks for a discussion of Wicked Fox by Kat Cho. As always, we'd love to be in conversation with you magical 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 @thelibrarycoven You can post or tweet about the show using the hashtag critically reading and the library coven. And you can contact us via email at the library Cubin at Gmail dot com.

kelly [00:55:05] You can subscribe to The Library Coven on the podcast app of your choice. And we really appreciate it. If you would rate and review the show and spread the word to other magical folks out there who you think would enjoy it. 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 Patriota in exchange for Minnesota bonus up swag and much more early access to episodes, discord, et cetera, et cetera. And now you can support the show by shopping at our bookshop dot org affiliate Page. Kelly is recording on Ute Cheyenne and Arapaho Land. Jessie is recording on Peoria. Kaskaskia, Peankasha, Wea, Miami. Mascoutin, Odawa, Sauk, Mesquaki, Kickapoo, Pottawatomie, Ojibwe and Chickasaw Land. Until next time, stay magical.

transition [00:55:58] [jaunty string and harpsichord music plays]

kelly [00:56:13] Katrina, Katrina, Malic and Katrina are these doppelgangers that don't exist.