

## The Library Coven

### Episode 44. *Blanca & Roja* by Anna-Marie McLemore

**transition** [00:00:08] [jaunty string and harpsichord music plays].

**jessie** [00:00:08] Hello! And welcome to the Library Coven, a bi-weekly podcast in which two bookish besties discuss mostly YA [young adult] fantasy through the lens of intersectional feminist criticism. Why? Because critique is our fangirl love language and because talking about books is pretty magical. I'm Jessie.

**kelly** [00:00:23] And I'm Kelly. In this episode, we're talking about *Blanca y Roja*, Anna Marie McLemore. *Blanca and Roja del Cisne* are sisters from a family with a generational curse. At some point during their teen years, one of the two daughters will turn into a swan never to be seen or heard from again, except in Swan form, I guess. And then whe--- the sisters team up with two friends who mysteriously turned into non nonhuman animals. And then at that point, social assumptions and sibling rivalry take their toll on the relationships and chaos ensues. Can they break the curse? It's a YA novel. So you probably know the answer. [jessie laughs]

**jessie** [00:01:04] Um, this week we're asking people to please be kind and stay home this holiday season if you're able to. We're really close to a vaccine, and it would be great to keep numbers down until people could get vaccinated. We're in a really delicate time right now. So call to action: stay home if you can. If you can't, wear a mask.

**kelly** [00:01:24] It goes over your nose. [jessie laughs]

**jessie** [00:01:28] Yes, over the nose.

**kelly** [00:01:32] Please come hang out with us on the social media, as Jessie wrote it, "the social media".

**jessie** [00:01:38] I wanted to say the "sosh meed", but I was like "nah, too much." [laughs]

**kelly** [00:01:42] We love chatting with you all. Let us know what books you want us to discuss for season four because we are planning it is time to get planning. We have the lineup ready for the end of the season and we are going to see what the lineup for next season is. So please slide into our DMs and let us know what you what books you want us to discuss.

**transition** [00:02:01] [jaunty string music plays]

**jessie** [00:02:04] Initial reactions. I'm going to take a wild guess that this book gets called, quote unquote, literary, a lot a term I'm not overly fond of, but I thought this book was a bit "meh" for me. The pacing was pretty slow and I don't feel like we got to know any of the characters really well. And I didn't enjoy most of the characters. [laughs] What about you?

**kelly** [00:02:28] I had slash have similar feelings about the novel. It was kind of hard for me to suspend my disbelief about the world building and magical system for reasons that we're going to discuss. And I didn't super ship any of the characters.

**jessie** [00:02:42] "super ship" [both laugh].

**kelly** [00:02:42] And I agree with your ship and I I agree with you that I didn't feel like I knew them too well or, um, it was very poetic prose wise and. I do think McLemore crafts some beautiful turns of phrase. And yeah, let's let's get it, let's get to it.

**transition** [00:03:08] [jaunty string music plays]

**kelly** [00:03:11] Time to talk about world building in through the wardrobe.

**jessie** [00:03:15] I could never get a really good sense of when this book was taking place. There were some modern things like cars and phones in the house, and then there are some, like old timey things, that's in quotes because I'm like, I don't know what to say. Old timey.

**kelly** [00:03:30] Time is made up.

**jessie** [00:03:32] Yeah, like, yeah. Like societal expectations felt very dated.

**kelly** [00:03:37] But Like no cell phones, right?

**jessie** [00:03:39] But no cell phones. And I was like, what are these cars look like? Are they driving stick all the time? Like, I just didn't really get a good sense. It felt like it was taking place outside of time, but also like within this very small window of time. So I just was like. I feel like I just didn't get a sense of place while I was reading the book because I wasn't, like, very grounded and when it was taking place. But also, it's like not like a fantasy world, like it's not like like, uh. Now, like, it's not like Six of Crows [by Leigh Bardugo] or The Cruel Prince [by Holly Black], where it's like taking place in some other world, it seems like it is our world, you know what I mean?

**kelly** [00:04:20] Yes, I agree with you. I yeah, I don't have much to add. I think the the way you succinctly said that is like, I don't know, kind of sums up some of my issues. Um, and I think why I couldn't get into it as I was saying. You know, like the "meh". I could tell, obviously, that a lot of the world building was, um. Kind of taken from and reshaped and molded and changed from fairy tales such as Snow White and Rose Red and the ugly duckling ugly duckling. um, there was a lot of like playing around with the reader's expectations of those intertexts. And I think that I'm not sure how effective that was for the worldbuilding, honestly.

**jessie** [00:05:08] Yeah, it's like magical realism, light maybe is what I would call this.

**kelly** [00:05:13] Yeah, I do think magic realism is a good way to describe it. Um. Just like the supernatural just kind of happens and doesn't necessarily need an explanation, it just like works within the logic of the text. Um, so, yeah, thank you for saying that. That's a good segue.

**transition** [00:05:28] [juanty string music plays]

**jessie** [00:05:32] Wands out! Let's discuss all things magic. [both laugh] The magic really comes from two places, it seemed to me the curse that turns the del Cisne... is that how you say that?

**kelly** [00:05:43] "Del Cisne".

**jessie** [00:05:45] del Cisne women into swans and some ability that we see in Page and Yearling to become one with the woods in various ways. None of the magic really gets like explained, which felt like like and everyone also just kind of believes in it, even though it's taking place like in our in our world, which maybe that is like where the magic realism kind of comes from. I only read one magical realism. Oh, well, two Salman Rushdie and, um, Gabriel Garcia Marquez. So those are like that's all I got. [laughs] Um, But it felt like similar to those and that like the magic just kind of happens. It takes place in our real world. No one really questions it. It's just there.

**kelly** [00:06:29] Yeah. So we get the like shapeshifting aspect,.

**jessie** [00:06:32] mmhmm.

**kelly** [00:06:32] Which is one of the primary things because both the del Cisne girls and then also Yearling and Page all like change shape at some point. And do you know what "cisne" means?

**jessie** [00:06:44] Yeah, "swan" right?

**kelly** [00:06:46] All right. I just wanted to make sure. OK, it was like it really couldn't be clearer, but just like making sure that we got that out of the way.

**jessie** [00:06:53] I think I just, like, assumed that it meant like of this because it was "Del Cisne" and I was like, oh, it must mean of the Swans. I think I did look it up like Google Translate or whatever, but I was like, duh, of course, the means of the Swan, it's a YA novel. [both laugh] But, yeah, I was I kind of it it wasn't, like, exactly confusing to me. I was just like... I think I wanted more explanation, but the curse made sense. It was like Page and yearling. That didn't make sense to me for, like, their magical part. And I was just like I wanted more explanation about them because the magic seems so far removed from everyone else in town, like they seem to be calling Blanca and Roja and like their family, a family of witches and they thought they did like magic and like maybe bad stuff. Like the town would blame bad things that happen on the del Cisnes. But then, like Page and Yearling can also shift into these animals. And I'm like and no one is going to mention that other people can do magic. Like what? I was just confused by their magic abilities.

**kelly** [00:07:53] Cool.

**jessie** [00:07:55] Yeah, that's all I got. That's that's my magic. [laughs].

**jessie & kelly** [00:07:58] Wands away.

**transition** [00:07:59] [jaunty transition music plays]

**kelly** [00:08:01] Now we're going to talk about conflict villains and good versus evil in our segment, Get Me Kylo Ren!

**jessie** [00:08:08] Like the fucking swans, like, how are their feathers sharp? I don't know how feathers work, I guess they might, oh, because, you know, they have those, like, pointy pieces on the end maybe? You know?

**kelly** [00:08:21] Yeah, I mean, I can get it, it's magic, so, like, cool. We'll get on board with it.

**jessie** [00:08:26] But I'm also like all these swans are like former generations of your family and they are super shitty, like, what the fuck?

**kelly** [00:08:31] They're very mean to you.

**jessie** [00:08:33] also swans are like mean in real life. So I thought this was also like like one time I was at a park, we were like, go feed the ducks when I was a kid. And they were swans there. And then they we ran out of food and they like chased us. And I was like, yeah, swans are the fucking worst of all the birds. They're fucking hate that.

**kelly** [00:08:48] They're large and intimidating.

**jessie** [00:08:50] And they are mean. So I got it. But I was also like, this is your family. [laughs] Like it was they were rude, real fucking rude. And like turning them back in to girls, like when they were in the like.

**kelly** [00:09:04] –In the middle of there, so they would just like splat and die.

**jessie** [00:09:08] I will say I really like that scene, like when Yearling can see it and he just sees them, like, turn it back into people like from swans like mid-air, like as if they like blinked into existence. And that probably was like the best scene in the whole story because I was like, I can really see it.

**kelly** [00:09:24] Yes.

**jessie** [00:09:25] So I just really liked that scene where he's just like he can see them falling in like Blanca or Roja's hair like flying upwards and stuff. I was like, oh, that was like really well done.

**kelly** [00:09:34] Like a beautifully painted picture, but in like prose form.

**jessie** [00:09:39] Yeah, exactly.

**kelly** [00:09:39] Yeah. I agree with you. There is several moments like that throughout the novel. The Fuckin swans. Oh, my God. [laughs]

**jessie** [00:09:48] That's all I wrote the show notes was "the fucking swans".

**kelly** [00:09:52] [laughs] That's all she wrote. I would also say that, like the Liam, whoever that is. Like the cousin person,.

**jessie** [00:10:03] Yearling's cousin.

**kelly** [00:10:04] Yeah. And they got into a fight or Liam wanted to kill Yearling back when he was Barkely and for like cover up reasons, which we'll talk about later. But just. Yeah, I guess desperation to cover up bad stuff that you do because you don't want to get caught and pay the consequences, the people that the privilege is just like ugh.

**jessie** [00:10:29] And also really only really encouraged their fighting for some reason, as if as if it started out as like play fighting and turned into like this real thing that they did and kind of hurt each other. So I was just kind of like, I don't understand what's going on here, but OK [laughs].

**kelly** [00:10:43] OK, this is what we're doing. So I think there's a lot to talk about in the section. And then the other side that I think is worth mentioning is the like what kind of goes on between the sisters, like assuming things about people trying to manipulate and control them because you think you know what's best.

**jessie** [00:11:04] Surprise, surprise.

**kelly** [00:11:06] Blanca.

**jessie** [00:11:07] yeah, Ugh, yeah, I want to say, like it's maybe like it's like sort of like a sibling thing. They're also very close siblings to begin with, which to me is like, what does that mean? [laughs] I don't I don't compute. [laughs] So, like, their relationship was like seemed good, but then all of a sudden, like, took a turn. So I was just like I was like, I don't know what's going on with you, you two.

**kelly** [00:11:31] It was a little like the conflict seemed to be we didn't want either of them to turn into swans, but they both turn into swans and they turned back out of swans and then.

**jessie** [00:11:42] But also, I would have been fine if Blanca was the only one to turn into a swan and like, went away forever. So I was going to like this fine. [laughs]

**kelly** [00:11:48] Yeah, that's kind of what I was expecting to happen.

**jessie** [00:11:51] Yeah. Yeah.

**transition** [00:11:52] [jaunty string music plays]

**jessie** [00:11:56] 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** [00:12:09] Shall we begin with race, Jessie?

**jessie** [00:12:13] Yes, let's. So like the whole novel, it's named Blanca and Roja, so there's like this juxtaposition in views on skin color. So Blanca is praised for her like features. She has blond hair. She doesn't have blue eyes, but she has lighter skin. And she's told she'll be able to get a husband with blue eyes, presumably white, which, you know, assumes that she wants a husband and assumes that white is what is best. And then Roja is said to be angry and have tantrums and she has dark skin. So she's like almost on her way to, like, stereotypical, like angry black woman. And I was just like, What? What? why?

**kelly** [00:12:53] Yeah, it seems like the the juxtaposition was very stark between the two and how it is like like trying to make a point, I guess, but. Um, there are also moments there's was a little confused where Blanca's like, but she's not the same kind of white as the other white people and it just seemed like a little bit of like a splitting hairs on the like a colorism. in a sense of like what kind of white is really white? And like I mean, there is a it's all like racialized and gets into like a. Well, it's all constructed and then there are different

groups that gain access to the privileges of whiteness at different points, you know, and so it's like. It was, I think, an attempt to look at this, but I don't think it was particularly effective for me.

**jessie** [00:13:47] Well, I think it's difficult because there have been a lot of really good discussions on Instagram, um, of people talking about like what it means to be both white and Latinx. And I think that's where that, like, really comes into this. Like, you can be both. And if you're white, then you benefit from white privilege. Like if your skin is white, then you are white. [laughs] Like, it's not. And for me, this is hard because, you know, I'm biracial and, you know, talk about like white passing and that sort of thing, and I'm not. But I also I'm like, if you're white passing, you're white. You can be white and something else, but like, you benefit from all the privileges of being white. So this was like the problem with me, with Blanca in particular, because I'm like. You're not I mean, like you are different in that, yes, you are different, but you're still white and benefit from all those privileges. Like not every white person has blue eyes [kelly laughs] They made a really big deal about how she was white, but she had brown eyes. And I'm like, OK,.

**kelly** [00:14:48] Lots of white people have brown eyes.

**jessie** [00:14:51] It's a dominant eye color trait [kelly laughs] so like this was really difficult for me. Like the conversation was like trying to be nuance in the story. But I'm like. Blanca's literally a white savior, like she's just like trying to protect Roja at all costs and.

**kelly** [00:15:09] Without considering what she wants.

**jessie** [00:15:13] In any way, shape or form. And I was just like. Blanca, you're a white savior, you're a white person like you can be two things at once, but like understand the.

**kelly** [00:15:23] But like you're a white lady.

**jessie** [00:15:25] You're white. I'm going to rename Blanca Karen. [both laugh]

**kelly** [00:15:33] Oh, my gosh, I don't think I can add I'm not going to add anything to that. I think he should just figuratively drop your mic.

**jessie** [00:15:40] Yeah [chuckles] on that note, let's talk about class.

**kelly** [00:15:45] Let's! Also about white people because the people who are rich are racialized as white, um, the rich people doing bad shit to get their money like fraud and stuff the \*sings\* "tale as old as time" [jessie laughs] So anyway, I don't know how much there is to say about this, but it's just like it's a fucking racket!! OK?

**jessie** [00:16:07] Yeah, especially because it was like real terrible with that what's the last name of the Holt family, like literally being like here will build this town. It'll be great. And then they never build roads or schools or anything. I'm like, what the fuck is goin on?

**kelly** [00:16:19] Did this not remind you of Arrested Development?

**jessie** [00:16:23] Oh, I never watch that. Oh, my God. That's a real white people show.

**kelly** [00:16:27] Okay, fine. Yeah, I call them I am white. So it's fine. [jessie laughs] Of a because of Steve Holt, so many people who like Arrested Development out there. I

thought that was funny. I couldn't stop thinking about Steve Holt and then also the like. I'm gonna-- it's just so classic, like I'm going to make this town and not actually like, do it. There's just a bunch of empty homes and it's all just like a scam. Yeah. Classic,.

**jessie** [00:16:50] I guess maybe I need to get on that Arrested Development train. [laughs].

**kelly** [00:16:54] I don't know if you need to.

**jessie** [00:16:55] yeah i'm not gonna [laughs]. Would you like to talk about gender?

**kelly** [00:17:01] Sure. I think there's several things to discuss. Um, the big one being Page's non binary, gender nonconforming, um, uses he and she pronouns. And I think this is the first, like, really fleshed out enby characters that we've read for the podcast, am I right?

**jessie** [00:17:21] Yeah, I would agree. Um, and I think that McLemore did a really good job talking about, um, like pronoun usage, which I don't think we've gotten... Like we've gotten characters who have used, um, like they pronouns and some of our stories, especially in um what do we just read? Wayward Witch [by Zoraida Cordova]

**kelly** [00:17:40] Yeah.

**jessie** [00:17:40] Um, and we got a little bit of a discussion there in Wayward Witch I thought about, um, what it means to be gender nonconforming. But I, I really enjoyed the discussion between Blanka and Page, um, about that. I thought it was really well done.

**kelly** [00:17:55] Yeah. Just it was very intimate, very honest and I thought very pure and just like. I love how gender is just like it's a scam and how young people know, and it's great.

**jessie** [00:18:10] Yeah, and I also like that for Page talked about like...They were fine with he pronouns she pronouns, they didn't want to be called a daughter or a girl, I think that's correct?

**kelly** [00:18:22] Right. Yeah.

**jessie** [00:18:23] Um, but kind of just like trying to explain to Blanca and I think that they did a really good job explaining like, this is what I want to be called. I don't really mind these pronouns, but I don't like this word, you know, or something along those lines I thought was really good.

**kelly** [00:18:37] Yeah And I like definitely relate on some of those things. And it's just like and it's. It's also very personal, like I don't like woman. No, I don't like that. And then also, like, I can't with husband and wife, like, there's just dynamics that I can't. So. But yeah, as far as like the queerness and the and the, um. In the sense of like gender identity, I thought that that was one of the strong points of the novel, um, it was really just done with a lot of compassion. And I think that there to be a lot more stories like this.

**jessie** [00:19:13] Yeah, I also really enjoy that the very beginning when we're kind of getting the story about the del Cisnes, there was, uh, uh, a mom who thought that she had like she had escaped the curse because she had a daughter and a son. And then the son

was like, "no, I'm not. I'm a daughter." And then one of the daughters got taken as a swan [laughs] and that to me was just like a really good way to put that in there, like how, you know, things can change. Yeah.

**kelly** [00:19:39] Just normalizing, like trans-ness and just being like, yeah, it happens. Enby-ness, you know, it just happens.

**jessie** [00:19:44] Yeah, but I really like that. When I saw that I like marked it, you know, I look at my notes like oh like yeah.

**kelly** [00:19:53] I liked our butch gay grandmas.

**jessie** [00:19:56] They were sweet.

**kelly** [00:19:58] I could just like I just take me to your cabin and make me cider and just we'll knit together.

**jessie** [00:20:07] I did have trouble. I was like for a while, though I will say that I wasn't sure I was like a yearling. and Page related somehow. I was kind of confused about that because the grandmas were so similar.

**kelly** [00:20:18] That's true. There wasn't much differentiation.

**jessie** [00:20:20] Yeah. So I would have liked, I think more like contrast between them or something, but I think it's also because they both live like. I didn't understand, like, did they I know that at the time they were living together, but I wasn't sure like how they lived together before, like before Page and Yearling disappeared, like, that part was, like, confusing to me. For some reason. I was like, who are these? Who are these grandmas and whose grandmas are they? [kelly laughs]

**kelly** [00:20:44] What is the relationship?

**jessie** [00:20:46] Yeah.

**kelly** [00:20:46] Yeah, yeah, yeah. And I think that that gets to the point about like how those other Page and Yearling are the two characters whose stories, um, I think. Could use, like a little bolstering or as far as like fleshing out, you know, the connections and stuff like that, which is, you know. Done to a certain extent, um, but yeah, still for some questions,.

**jessie** [00:21:12] Yeah,.

**kelly** [00:21:13] Like putting it all together, obviously, after the fact, like, that's fine.

**jessie** [00:21:17] Yeah.

**kelly** [00:21:18] What about ability, bodyminds?

**jessie** [00:21:21] So Yearling has lost his sight in one eye and is learning how to live differently with that and also teaching people how to help him live differently with that. Like he's you know, Roja doesn't realize at first that he has lost his sight. So he's like, you know, if you could come up to me on my right side or like. For him, he's trying to navigate



around spaces that he had previously felt like he knew really well, but I guess like losing your eyesight makes it hard for, like, depth perception. So he's like running into things and knocking things over. So he is kind of like dealing with that.

**kelly** [00:21:58] I really liked this representation of visual impairment, I don't-- I haven't really seen it from many authors, I don't think. And then I also and I think this is another strong point of the book about how it shows... Like you were talking about just like talking about accommodations and just like very honestly and like, it's not weird. It's just like these are accommodations... They're not even accommodations like these are our access needs. And these we're in constant discussion about them. It also seems like *Girling* has some understandably some trauma from the *Liem* incidents. First, it was the first one and then plural because another one happens.

**jessie** [00:22:42] Yeah, and I think it was interesting because I think oftentimes and especially in my books, we see like abuse from a parental figure or authority figure. So it was really different to see it coming from like I know that they're not siblings or cousins, but like a sibling-like a person, because I don't think that's something we see.

**kelly** [00:23:01] Yeah more of like a peer dynamic rather than the parental.

**jessie** [00:23:06] Yeah, but it's definitely probably something that happens. Um, so I thought that the author did a good job by talking about that. I mean, maybe the book could have used like a content warning because it was fine for me, but I can see how those fight scenes could be a little much.

**kelly** [00:23:22] Also, there was some very open discussion about periods and menstruation, which is refreshing to see.

**jessie** [00:23:28] Yeah, we don't see that very often. *Roja's* periods are like debilitating, which I was like, oh, I get I would like get sick pre- birth control and now it's like fine but right. It could be really, really tough, especially when you're young. It's like staying home from school, like missing out on those kinds of things. It's it's hard.

**kelly** [00:23:50] Right. And I loved how it was showing the family caring for each other, you know, that first her grandma would do it and then *Blanca* would do it. And then I'm also like *Roja* you need to learn some how to do this yourself to.

**jessie** [00:24:03] Yeah. Although we do find out that her like her like mom doesn't really teach her stuff in the kitchen because we've got like parental favorites or whatever.

**kelly** [00:24:10] But we also forgot to talk about that. Parents. Yeah. Parents like a go up in *Kylo Ren*. Bye.

**jessie** [00:24:15] Yeah. Um. But also like yearling wasn't weird about it, which was good.

**kelly** [00:24:21] That was really nice.

**jessie** [00:24:23] Yeah, but like *Blanca* also forgot about how her sister gets these, like basically debilitating cramps or whatever during her period and was just like off with *Page* eatin' apples. And I was like, what the fuck are you doing?

**kelly** [00:24:34] Not even metaphorically. Nothing. Not even a double entendre.

**jessie** [00:24:38] It's not a no no, not at all. I was just like, is this like a Garden of Eden thing going on here? Like, what is this imagery? I am like.

**kelly** [00:24:48] A little lost.

**jessie** [00:24:50] Yes. But I'm also like, your sister needs you right now. Like, what the fuck are you doing?

**kelly** [00:24:56] You gotta stray from the path.

**jessie** [00:24:58] Oh, my God. Do you? [both laugh].

**transition** [00:25:00] [jaunty string music plays]

**kelly** [00:25:05] Finally, it's time for Shipwrecked, a segment about asexuality, sexuality, sex, romance and relationships, and sometimes we take liberties and do some shipping of our own.

**jessie** [00:25:14] So I guess we should talk about like this sibling rivalry going on between Blanca and Roja. It's like at first they're like very close, I think, as we talked about earlier. And then they. La Roja finds out that Blanca is like basically hiding something from her, and she Roja thinks that Blanca is hiding the fact that Blanca needs to be with Yearling in order to break the curse. And.

**kelly** [00:25:44] No one's hiding anything from anyone, is the thing.

**jessie** [00:25:48] Yes, except for the fact that, um. Blanca is kind of hiding the fact that the person who gets the blue eyed boy will not turn into a swan like she could have just told Roja that and Roja could have gone after yearling because they like each other anyways. But instead, Blanca is like, no, let me manipulate this, because I don't think that someone would fall in love with Roja. And I'm like, what the fuck is wrong with you? Like, why are you a terrible human being? I don't low key, i high key hate you. Like what? I was so annoyed with block of the whole story. I was like, I don't even want any more of your segments. Like, I would happily skip your chapters. [both laugh]

**kelly** [00:26:29] It it did seem like a little. The breakup, like the like breaking point for the sibling, seemed like a little. I don't know, maybe it's like a first love, and so it feels very there's lots of hormones and it feels very high stakes or whatever, um. But yeah, I just felt like, wow, if you can think that, then were you really that close? Or were you was it like all of your closeness manufactured because you wanted to avoid the thing that you've been told is going to happen and then it ends up happening?

**jessie** [00:27:05] to both of you. Mm hmm. Yeah, I was like, really just frustrated. I'm like, Blanca, why don't you just tell Roja what the señoras had told you? Yeah. Just share information instead of hoarding it.

**kelly** [00:27:19] Like, no, I have to martyr myself.

**jessie** [00:27:24] ugh white saviorism 101.

**kelly** [00:27:27] just say no to white saviorism.

**jessie** [00:27:30] And drugs [laughs] actually I don't care if you say no to drugs.

**kelly** [00:27:34] You can say yes sometimes to drugs. Just be safe.

**jessie** [00:27:37] Be safe. Be safe.

**kelly** [00:27:40] We have some ships. I don't feel very strongly about either ship. I would dive off of. And swim.

**jessie** [00:27:50] Yeah, I kind of like roja and yearling because they're both, like, kind of angry and like I'm like they would probably like. I don't know. I feel like I like them together, but I also feel like it's because they're like coming to like this mutual understanding of each other, whereas like Blanca and Page, it's like a love at first sight thing, which is not always my fav. So,.

**kelly** [00:28:11] Yeah. And it did seem very like visceral.

**jessie** [00:28:17] Mm hmm.

**kelly** [00:28:19] Versus the other kind of attraction, which was more like the mutual understanding, like you just said.

**jessie** [00:28:25] Yeah, so I'm kind of like whatever about the ships. I didn't think Liam would turn out to be so bad, like he seemed fine at the ice cream store, convenience, wherever they were, everywhere.

**kelly** [00:28:35] He seemed OK,.

**jessie** [00:28:37] But and then all of a sudden I was like, oh, God, he's terrible.

**kelly** [00:28:39] Oh, no. Oh, no. That's taking a turn.

**jessie** [00:28:42] Yeah, it really did.

**kelly** [00:28:45] Yeah. I don't I don't know. I don't have too much to say about shipwrecked. It's nice that there's representation. It's queer. Um and. Yeah.

**jessie** [00:28:55] I guess this is a good time to talk about the parents and their, like parent favoritism, which was.

**kelly** [00:28:59] Oh, yeah,.

**jessie** [00:29:01] You know, I actually didn't hate this because I do think that all parents have a favorites and some parents are just better at hiding it than others.

**kelly** [00:29:07] I'm thinking about that, that scene in The Crown [season 4].

**jessie** [00:29:11] [both laugh] Yeah.

**kelly** [00:29:13] Yes, where Philip is like, are you going to be honest about who is your favorite?

**jessie** [00:29:18] Yeah, yeah. Turns out that you're your favorite as a peddo, but OK? In real life, they really put that in loops. They really did a good job of, like putting on the show. Um, but yeah, I thought that was a depiction of like favorites was really well done because I do think this is how it works when you have a favorite child. Um, I say this as a child who is not the favorite to either parent. So maybe that skews my view.

**kelly** [00:29:43] You're like you're not fooling anyone.

**jessie** [00:29:45] No! Oh, my God, no. You can tell, like, you know. Anyways, so, um, but I did like at the end once a parent like how once the curse was all cured, cured, fixed, whatever, the parents kind of realized that they had done a bad job with their own relationship and like the relationship with their kids. So like, um, uh, the dad is like trying to share the books with Blanca more and like talk like he's like, let me know what you think about it after you read it. And the mom is like trying to show Rosa how to cook, which I'm like probably parents should show all their kids how to cook. It's like a necessity for living.

**kelly** [00:30:22] A life skill.

**jessie** [00:30:23] Yeah. That some people just don't have. So.

**kelly** [00:30:26] It was very much like the sauce that once the like metaphor for society's expectations or whatever was lifted, then they could actually have meaningful relationships with each other. So it's just like, can we just skip to that part, Friends? Yeah, I'm talking like outside of the book world, like,.

**jessie** [00:30:44] Yeah, parents treat your children well. You had them. Now take care of you.

**kelly** [00:30:50] You made this choice.

**jessie** [00:30:52] Yes. Oh, yeah.

**transition** [00:30:53] [jaunty string music plays]

**jessie** [00:30:56] Now we're going to talk about writing style, narration, characterization and plot structure and basically whatever else comes to mind in a segment called Kill Your Darlings. There was so much exposition and not a lot of dialogue in this book, which is why I'm going to guess it gets cast as literary.

**kelly** [00:31:17] There were a lot of similes and metaphors.

**jessie** [00:31:20] ugh, which you know what I don't really enjoy? I want to highlight every one, and I bet there'd be like five million tabs in my book.

**kelly** [00:31:28] Oh, yeah, there would have been a lot.

**jessie** [00:31:31] Yeah, so I did not really enjoy this, I want to see interactions between the characters and I want to see them talking about things, but this book was really like exposition heavy. And I was just like, not my fave.

**kelly** [00:31:45] Mm hmm. I agree with your take, there are a lot of smells and tastes describe too. I would say it relied very heavily on, like sensory, um To try to, like, make this...To put the reader, I guess, in there in the scene. Especially the apples, lots of apples, and I was just like, I don't like a very good vocabulary.

**jessie** [00:32:08] Yeah, but I'm like, one, is this real? Like, are there really this many different kinds of apples? No idea. Two, like the apples tastes like strawberries or whatever. I'm just like, wait, what? Like this that part is like describing food is like very like. I'm not here for it, I will just say.

**kelly** [00:32:30] you're not here for, like the big banquet scenes. [laughs]

**jessie** [00:32:33] Tell me what the food is. But once you start telling me what it tastes like because you have to use other tastes to describe it, I'm like, well, that's not helpful to me. It tastes like, you know, like carrots.

**kelly** [00:32:46] [laughs] Exactly.

**jessie** [00:32:46] Or like when you have a wine tasting in there, like taste the like hints of pineapple on, like there's no fucking pineapple and there's it's it's old grapes. It tastes like old grapes. [kelly laughs]I just I can't with the.

**kelly** [00:33:00] Can you please read some product descriptions? you'd be great at marketing wine. Old grapes for sale.

**jessie** [00:33:08] Yeah. Old grapes for sale. They're like leather. I do get the leather taste sometimes like I'm like I smell it but I'm like it's just tastes like old disgusting. I don't like wine so it's not helpful. But I.

**kelly** [00:33:20] Don't hire Jessie to try and market any kind of wine.

**jessie** [00:33:24] Or drink in general, cuz they're like Dr. Pepper, twenty three flavors, and I'm like it's cherry. It tastes like cherry.

**kelly** [00:33:31] Does it?

**jessie** [00:33:32] Cherry soda.

**kelly** [00:33:33] Really?

**jessie** [00:33:33] Yeah. It's the main flavor in there is cherry.

**kelly** [00:33:34] I had no idea. I just thought it tasted like Dr. Pepper [laughs].

**jessie** [00:33:38] You know, because Pibb extra is like a cherry flavored soda and I'm like yep. That's it.

**kelly** [00:33:44] Ohhhh well. Mm.

**jessie** [00:33:46] Yeah.

**kelly** [00:33:46] I'm learning things.

**jessie** [00:33:48] Anyway, that's a side rant.

**kelly** [00:33:49] blowing my taste buds right now!

**jessie** [00:33:54] [laughs] Like it tastes like what it is, OK?

**kelly** [00:33:58] I uh, there are short chapters, which I usually like, because it seems to move things along, um, I don't I think it did help move things along in this story and I wanted them to move along. So, yeah,.

**jessie** [00:34:11] Also weird because it's going back and forth-- like the story is supposed to be Blanca and Roja's but we had a Page and yearling in there is in there as well. And I was like, why do we need that? But this like I don't want Page or Yearling's story, really.

**kelly** [00:34:25] I want Page's story. I liked Page's story. I don't know, I was kind of like more interested in the in the guys and their friendship than I was in Blanca and Roja and they're like generational curse anyway.

**jessie** [00:34:38] Yeah, I think it wasn't really that interested in Page and Yearling because, like, Page seemed to leave because like because Yearling left and I was just like, OK, you guys are just really close and that's fine.

**kelly** [00:34:49] I'm like, oh, give me the friends. Why are you friends? [laughs]

**jessie** [00:34:55] Which I guess leads well into the like did we really need this side story about yearly in his family secret?

**kelly** [00:35:03] no.

**jessie** [00:35:03] The positives in the story is that it showed someone taking a stand and leaving their toxic and abusive family, which was great. I am like super here for that.

**kelly** [00:35:12] We need to see more like that.

**jessie** [00:35:13] Yeah, just like just because related to someone doesn't mean you have to have a relationship with them, like treat them like the trash that they are and get rid of them. Like biggest piece of advice I could ever give someone with a toxic family is just if you're if it's possible, like just leave your life will be so much better. I say this from experience, but I really just felt like it was on the back burner for most of the story. So I also like completely forgot about it most of the time. So I was like, I don't think we need this.

**kelly** [00:35:43] Nope, I don't think so either. It was just kind of like came it came up and it seemed to be like. I was confused about how all of the conflicts were like related to each other and yeah. It did feel a little whiplashy.

**transition** [00:35:56] [jaunty string music plays].

**kelly** [00:36:00] Recommend, if you like.

**jessie** [00:36:02] Let's say Grimm's Fairy Tales, Hans Christian Andersen, fairy tales,.

**kelly** [00:36:06] Fairy tales.

**jessie** [00:36:07] Yeah.

**kelly** [00:36:08] By dead white Europeans [laughs]

**jessie** [00:36:12] I would also say practical magic. Uh, I've only I can only speak to the movie because I haven't read the book, which is by Alice Hoffman, but I like the Sandra Bullock movie, even though it's super cheesy and like Lifetime-y kind of. Um, but like two sisters, magic set in our real world. And the sister ship Sisterhood is like the main aspect of that story, I would say. I love that movie, um, a lot. So, yeah.

**kelly** [00:36:42] Those are good recommendations.

**transition** [00:36:43] [jaunty string music plays]

**jessie** [00:36:46] Before we end, it's time for real talk. Did 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?

**kelly** [00:36:55] I'm gonna let you take it away, Jessie.

**jessie** [00:36:58] OK, so it's hard because I'm trying to make sure I use everyone's names because sometimes I just start using pronouns and then everything gets lost. So bear with me. So Page thinks Roja must know that Blanca is giving up plonkers life for Rosa. But Page doesn't understand what it means to think that the obvious answer is that people would choose anyone but you. Roja has been told her whole life that everything, everyone would pick Blanca over her and they've shown her that with her, with their actions as well. So why should Blanca be any different? Even Page is doing it. Page is hurting Roja because they want to be with Blanca, which with like no regard for Roja's wants her feelings. So I kind of hated everyone in this story except for Roja. Only redeemable character. [laughs]I'm like, why are all of you so terrible to Roja, like what the fuck?

**kelly** [00:37:53] She's the best one here. She's the prettiest one. She's got the best personality. Come on.

**jessie** [00:38:00] I was just real annoyed with everyone just being like, I don't understand, like why Aroha would be so upset. And I'm like, because everyone treats her like trash except for her dad. Like, of course, that's why.

**kelly** [00:38:11] maybe that's why. And that's why she doesn't like any of you, shocker.

**jessie** [00:38:14] why she doesn't trust anyone.

**kelly** [00:38:15] Shocker.

**jessie** [00:38:17] Like, the story literally starts with, like Roja thinking Blanca is lying to her so that Blanca will not become a swan because Blanca is hiding information from her. Like and her dad's the only one that tells her it like.

**kelly** [00:38:32] Ugh, Poor Roja. she got the short end of the stick here.

**jessie** [00:38:37] Yeah, she really did.

**kelly** [00:38:38] Go be a swan or a bear. a beautiful Black Swan.

**jessie** [00:38:43] Except for that the Swans also hate Roja, sooo.

**kelly** [00:38:45] So maybe don't be a swan. Go be a bear.

**jessie** [00:38:49] Yeah. Yeah, so I don't know, I just felt really bad for Roja throughout the story, and we're supposed to feel like Blanca is redeemed because she was trying to do what's best for Roja behind her back. But I was just like. No, like, just no, I know it's a lot of, like, miscommunication going on, and sometimes that can be frustrating when it's like the whole story hinges on miscommunication.

**kelly** [00:39:11] And one thing rather than like a build up of conflict or something like that.

**jessie** [00:39:16] Yeah. Yeah. So anyways, I'm here for Roja and no one else.

**kelly** [00:39:26] Thanks for listening to the library Coven. We'll be back in two weeks for a discussion of Queen of the Conquered by Kacen Callender. As always, we love to be in discussion 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 hashtags #CriticallyReading and #TheLibraryCoven. And you can contact us via email at the library coven at Gmail dot com. And we are getting better at responding to emails, friends. [laughs]

**jessie** [00:39:58] You can subscribe to the library coven on the podcast app of your choice, and we'd really appreciate it if you would rate and review the show and spread the 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 Patriot in exchange for many those bonus apps, swag (one day0 and more. And you can support the show by shopping at our bookshop dog affiliate page. Until next time, stay magical.

**kelly** [00:40:24] Kelly is recording on Ute, Cheyenne and Arapaho Land. Jessie is recording on Peoria, Kaskaskia, Peankasha, Wea. Miami, Mouscotin, Odawa, Sauk, Mesquaki, Kickapoo, Pottawatomie, Ojibwe and Chickasaw Land.

**transition** [00:40:44] [jaunty harpsichord and string music plays]