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**Leah Gregory:** Hi, everyone. Welcome to the first episode of season two of *Can't Shelve This*, the podcast where we hammer home the importance of school libraries. I'm Leah Gregory, and I'm joined by my co-host, Janette Derucki.

**Janette Derucki:** Hi, everybody.

**Leah:** And our producer, Ola Gronski.

**Ola Gronski:** Hi, everyone.

**Leah:** Can you believe it is time to come back to school, you guys?

**Janette:** No, the summer went too fast.

**Leah:** [chuckles] It did go pretty fast.

**Ola:** Flew by. It flies by faster and faster every single year. Is that what life is?

**Leah:** That is what life is.

**Janette:** Just wait until you get to be our age, Ola.

**Leah:** It is unreal how fast it goes by. I remember when I was a kid, getting to 4th of July took forever.

**Ola:** It did seem so long.

**Leah:** Then you felt like you still have a ton of summer left after 4th of July.

**Ola:** I suppose that's life without a job. You don't have anything you have to do. Every day is a weekend when you're a kid in the summer.

**Janette:** Oh, so nice. I don't know that I ever felt like 4th of July to the beginning of school was very long. It always felt like once 4th of July hit, I felt like summer was over, even as a kid. We would start to back to school shop. We would start to look for school supply lists and, all of that stuff. I guess we started school about the same time, mid to late August.

**Leah:** Mid-August, yes.

**Ola:** Did you guys like back-to-school season or did you dread it when you were kids?

**Janette:** I loved back-to-school season.

**Leah:** Loved back to school, and I still do.

**Ola:** I love supply shopping.

**Leah:** Yes.

**Janette:** Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Ola:** Finding your binders, your folders, all the pencil pouches.

**Leah:** Yes. Your lunchbox, yes.

**Janette:** I loved back to school. I can remember, honestly, still vivid memory buying my first ever Trapper Keeper. Did you ever have a Trapper Keeper, Leah?

**Ola:** Oh, yeah.

**Leah:** Oh, yes.

**Janette:** Ola, yeah. They came back, and now I think they're still out, right?

**Leah:** I think they're still a thing, yeah.

**Janette:** I think they're called planners now. When you're an adult, they don't call them Trapper Keepers.

**Leah:** I went through a brief phase of when I was actually teaching and was on a school teacher's schedule of, I did not want to see the back-to-school ads on the 4th of July. I wanted it to come at the end of July. Even as a teacher, I was still energized by back-to-school and liked to go back to school.

**Janette:** I feel like now they start even earlier. They start in June, almost. You start to see the Target commercials, and all of that stuff, advertising, like, "Get ready for back to school." I'm like, they just got out of school, and you already want to send them back.

**Ola:** Then by the time the parents have time to take the kids back to school shopping, everything's sold out, and you're just getting the dregs.

**Leah:** That's everything, though. By the time you think you want a bathing suit, it's too late. You've got to buy sweaters or Christmas stuff.

**Janette:** Yes, that is so true.

**Leah:** It irritates me.

**Ola:** Halloween stuff was out as soon as 4th of July was over.

**Janette:** Yes.

**Ola:** But I'm not complaining about that.

[laughter]

**Janette:** I'm only complaining about it because it makes me want cooler fall weather and you still have to wait quite a bit for that. No, but I love everything about back to school. The thing I remember the most about going back to school and that time of year is not even really the back-to-school shopping. It's the smells of when you would walk into school, and it was all the polished wood and the polished floors, and just how all of that is such a sense--

**Ola:** Like a freshly-waxed gym floor.

**Janette:** Yeah. It's like a sense memory for me, I guess, so yeah.

**Ola:** Totally.

**Leah:** I was hit with the biggest sense of nostalgia the other day. Janette will probably remember this one. Do you remember the tin lunchboxes, the square metal ones with the matching thermos?

**Janette:** Oh, yeah. I had strawberry shortcake and Care Bears, yes.

**Leah:** I had this really cute one, and it was pink gingham, and it had strawberries on it.

**Janette:** Aw.

**Ola:** Cute.

**Leah:** I saw it, like--

**Janette:** Wait, was it Holly Hobbie?

**Leah:** No, it wasn't Holly Hobbie, but I loved Holly Hobbie. I remember this one I saw on eBay or something, and you know, when just a smell or a sight or something, you're just like, "Whoa." I was just taken back.

**Janette:** I think it's so funny how all those nostalgic gifts and those items are all coming back, and it's because they know we're going to buy it, and now our generation is-- We're older, right? We are not maybe as financially strapped as we were when we were younger. You have disposable income. They're like, "Let's get them right in the feelings."

**Ola:** I get nostalgic for pizza dipper day at school. Everyone hated those--

**Janette:** School pizza day.

**Ola:** They were like, "This tastes raw," and I would be like, "I'll eat it. Hand it over. Give me your extra unclaimed pizza dippers."

**Janette:** You had pizza dippers. We just had school pizza, the rectangular pizza.

**Leah:** The rectangle pizza.

**Ola:** The rectangle with the weird cubed pepperoni?

**Leah:** Yes.

**Janette:** Yes. Ours was mostly just always cheese.

**Leah:** I think ours was only cheese, too. I don't know if we ever had toppings.

**Ola:** I have a vivid memory of miniature cubed pepperoni, question mark. Who knows what it really was.

**Janette:** Okay, so what was your pizza side? What did they serve with your pizza?

**Ola:** I think it was a salad. I'm pretty sure.

**Janette:** Ours was always salad, too.

**Ola:** And the carton of milk.

**Janette:** Yes, chocolate milk, always.

**Leah:** Or something weird like pears or green beans that just absolutely does not go with pizza.

**Ola:** The ones in the little plastic container with the juice in them.

**Leah:** Yes.

**Janette:** Yes.

**Ola:** Yeah.

**Janette:** I think ours was almost always salad, and I think it's because they knew kids would buy pizza and they would not normally get salad, right? It was just like, "How can we get rid of this lettuce? Here you go." And it’s covered in some kind of mystery dressing, and I was like, is it Italian dressing? Maybe. Was it Thousand Island? Maybe.

**Leah:** Ranch? Maybe.

**Janette:** Yeah, you just didn't know.

**Leah:** Honestly, it was the dregs of whatever's left over from three separate barrels put into one. [laughs]

**Janette:** [chuckles] I was a bring-your-lunch kind of kid. The only day I ever bought my lunch was pizza day. I brought my lunch every-- My poor mother having to make lunch for me every single day.

**Ola:** I didn't bring my own lunch until high school, and then at that point, shout out to my high school, we were known for the cookies that they would sell because they were practically underbaked, and they were so, so good to the point that-- My older sister and brother, we have a big age gap. My sister's 10 years older, my brother's 6 years older than me. When I would be in high school, they'd be like, "Hey, can you snag us some cookies?" because everybody in my town knows about those cookies.

**Janette:** What I want to know is were they Otis Spunkmeyer cookies?

**Ola:** I don't know. Allegedly, people in the school made them. Some of the students helped, I think, and maybe some of the special education classes or the culinary classes-

**Leah:** I can't do that anymore. Yeah.

**Ola:** -allegedly.

**Janette:** I remember, and I want to say I was in college, there were Otis Spunkmeyer cookies, and I want to say they were in our dining hall. There was a special little oven, and I think the dough comes pre-made, and so they were literally just putting them in the little oven-

**Ola:** So maybe.

**Janette:** -and baking them, but they were always hot, and we were like, These are the best cookies ever. [chuckles]

**Ola:** They were undercooked. They were practically raw in the middle. Oh, my gosh.

**Janette:** I feel like, yeah, I'm still like, you could probably lure me to a van with hot cookies. I'd be like, I'm here.

**Leah:** Yes. Have you guys ever been to Hershey, the city?

**Janette:** Yes, yes.

**Leah:** Yes. It's a chocolate lover's dream, basically, but my favorite thing about it is that their streetlights are shaped like Hershey's Kisses.

**Ola:** Oh, that's so darling.

**Leah:** It's so cute, yeah.

**Janette:** Are we ready to talk about-- Are we really ready to tackle season two, do you think? This is amazing. I'm so glad to be back with both of you, and just bring it on. That's what I have to say.

**Leah:** Yeah, I'm excited about this year.

**Ola:** I want to take a moment and reflect back on the success of season one, which I think you two owe yourselves a big old pat on the back for. Yeah, looking back on season one, we had nine episodes and over 5,700 downloads.

**Leah:** That is unbelievable to me.

**Janette:** I feel like that's amazing for a monthly podcast because a lot of podcasts come out more often, and so I think it's easier for them to keep their listeners engaged. A lot of that is thanks to the work that you're doing, Ola, to keep pushing it out there and reconnecting.

**Ola:** You mean pestering people? [laughs]

**Leah:** No, our marketing genius at work. [laughs] No, but you have done a very great job of selecting little bits and pieces that go out that intrigue people. The funny thing is I find myself, when those come out, I'm like, "Did we really say that? That was really smart." Then I go listen, and I'm like, "We actually do know what we're talking about."

**Ola:** What people don't know is I probably pick about five clips from every episode, so maybe I need to go back and release our B clips to see what didn't make the cut.

**Janette:** B roll, oh my.

**Leah:** Do you guys remember when we started out and we were talking a little bit about this, and my mom was like, "Who would listen to that?" She wasn't trying to be mean.

**Janette:** I do remember that. She was trying to manage your expectations, Leah.

**Leah:** She was. Do you remember Kate wanting to start the hashtag, #ProveLeahsMomWrong?

**Janette:** Yes, I do remember that.

**Ola:** I would say we did, especially because when we started this podcast, because our library systems are both in Illinois, that was our primary audience, right? But I would say that we've successfully broken out of that. Our listeners, while most of them are from Illinois, we are followed by California and Iowa as our-

**Janette:** Oh, wow.

**Ola:** -top three states that people listen from, which is pretty crazy.

**Janette:** That's amazing. I think that just shows how the school library space is so connected, right? A lot of what you talk about, regardless of location, applies across the board.

**Ola:** Even maybe internationally? We have international listeners, which is insane.

**Leah:** This is what blows my mind.

**Janette:** That is so wild to me, I mean, really wild.

**Ola:** I'll just list our top four regular listeners outside of the US. They come from Australia, Canada, the Philippines, and Kenya, a really broad range of countries, I would say, like literally from all over the world.

**Leah:** And not the ones I expected, not the ones that are somewhat similar to how we do school. You know what I'm saying?

**Ola:** Absolutely.

**Janette:** No, but I will say a huge hello and thank you to all those listeners.

**Leah:** Yes.

**Janette:** That's amazing that they're here. We're so happy to be together with them in this space. Yeah.

**Leah:** Yes.

**Janette:** So happy to have everyone here.

**Leah:** Well, we should definitely maybe have an international guest. That's what I was going to say.

**Ola:** Absolutely.

**Janette:** We need to work on an international guest. That would be so much fun.

**Ola:** International listeners, if you're listening, reach out to us. If you want to talk about what schools are like where you're listening from. Maybe not only internationally, but all over the US, we're always looking for new guest opportunities.

**Janette:** I would love to hear from an international school librarian, like someone who's a school librarian in a country that is not the United States. If you're an international school librarian and you would be interested in being on the podcast, please reach out to us. Since I know it's probably harder to call our hotline, maybe you can email us.

**Leah:** Yes, they can send an email to me, the podcast producer, ola.gronski@railslibraries.org. I can also put that in the podcast episode description. I'd love to hear from you.

**Janette:** I feel like it would be so interesting to talk to someone in another country or locale really, just because of the way that the funding is different, the needs are different. I think the niche of librarianship is constant across the board. Even the American Library Association, they consider themselves to be an international organization, but at the same time, it's not exactly the same.

**Leah:** It's not exactly the same.

**Janette:** Think about how different it is state to state within the U.S. It's got to be very different between countries. I would love to get that international perspective.

**Leah:** We've had some amazing guests on *Can't Shelve This* in our first season. I just can't thank all of those people enough for showing up and providing their library expertise.

**Janette:** That's one of my, one of the things that surprised me the most about season one is just how willing everyone was to participate and join us on this podcast. I'm sorry, I still fangirl and have those moments where I'm like, did we really talk to Mychal Threets?

**Ola:** We did.

**Janette:** We really did. To see all the things he's doing right now is just amazing. I'm so grateful to everyone who joined us for season one. We have a lot of amazing people lined up for season two. I'm looking forward to that.

**Leah:** I'm very excited. One of our most fun episodes that's coming up very, very soon is going to be at the AISLE Conference. We will be doing a live show.

**Ola:** It's happening.

**Janette:** If you're going to be in Champaign for the AISLE Conference, please plan to join us because it will be so sad if there's five people.

**Leah:** Or nobody. [laughs]

**Janette:** Also, there's a lot of amazing sessions at AISLE. I understand we're up against some competition.

**Leah:** It is very hard to decide which one that you want to be at, at AISLE because there's so many to choose from. But we hope that you will come by and maybe be featured on that episode.

**Janette:** Yeah, it's going to be so fun to talk to people and hear what they have to say and share about their libraries.

**Leah:** On the topic of back to school, there are a couple events that are coming up that we want to be sure to highlight. The first one is Extra Credit, which is a networking and continuing education program that we do at Illinois Heartland Library System. We're changing our format a little bit this year. It was like after school and pretty much freeform, but now we're focusing more on continuing education. The very first session will be on August 20th. Janette and Ola are joining me there, and we're going to talk about, kind of like behind the scenes of *Can't Shelve This*. What were we thinking when we decided to do this?

[laughter]

**Janette:** What were we thinking? That's what I'd like to ask myself. I'd like to go back in time and ask past me that same question. I'm excited for that. I'm really excited about the reformat of your group and to see if you can engage with a lot more school librarians that way. That's going to be exciting.

**Ola:** Is this opportunity only open to Heartland members or anyone in the state?

**Leah:** In the past, it has been only open to Heartland members, but I did specifically open it up this year for anyone because one of the best things about this podcast is connecting with librarians all over the state. So, I did open it up. If you're a school librarian, come to Extra Credit. The big draw is we offer PDH for it because I know it's very hard to get PDH.

**Ola:** I thought you were going to say we are the big draw.

**Leah:** The other event coming up is on September 17th, but registration is open now for the Illinois School Library Workers Symposium. This is the third annual occurrence of this event.

**Janette:** This is such a great event, too. I love it.

**Leah:** When we started planning it, it was Dan Bostrom at RAILS and me, and a few other people from AISLE, and the Illinois State Library, and Janette. We were like, "Well, if we get 50 people to come to the symposium, we'll consider that a success." We've registered at least 300 people every year.

**Janette:** The thing that I love about the symposium is that it is a professional development event. It's a full-day event, six and a half hours of professional development that is designed for non-licensed or unlicensed library workers. If you are someone who doesn't have your MLIS or your, what's it called? [chuckles]

**Leah:** Endorsement.

**Janette:** Or your LIS endorsement in Illinois, then you are more than welcome to come. We don't really close it to anyone. We do prioritize people who don't have previous formal training. It's just a really great way for them to get exposed to some of the routine knowledge and understanding of what happens in a library, what the library work is like, and to connect with other people.

**Leah:** And to get some of that training that you don't get if you haven't been to any library training.

**Janette:** Right.

**Leah:** So many people that come out of the symposium express to us that they're very grateful. They did not know about student confidentiality rights, and they did not know about weeding. Nobody had ever talked to them about weeding. Those are the kind of topics that we cover.

**Janette:** Yeah. Classroom management is a big one. I know a lot of people who are working in positions as library aides or paraprofessionals, they don't have a lot of training with regards to classroom management, so they are always grateful to have that. It's just a great place to ask other people questions. Like I said, it's not like you can't attend if you are licensed. We do get a good mix of people. It's like you have a lot of peers you could ask questions to as well, and a lot of repeat attendees because we do try to change the program every year. That's really great.

**Leah:** We can put the registration in the episode notes so that you can click on it and just go register because we'd love to see you there. The other thing that's great about this symposium is that we understand that it's really hard to devote an entire day when you also have a day job. So it is recorded, and you can go back and access the individual sessions later.

**Janette:** Can we talk a little bit about like the table talk opportunities? I feel like that is a really great part of the symposium where you have, it's almost like a built in little networking session around certain topics.

**Leah:** So we started table talk last year because so many school librarians are like lone wolves in their building. They don't have anybody else to talk to. Even if they have a librarian in another building, they don't necessarily talk to them every day. We decided to come up with a way for librarians and library staff to be able to chat. It's hard, I think, to start just talking to somebody, especially virtually. The platform that we use really does help with that because it mimics being at a conference and sitting at a table. It's really, really fun. We assign the tables a topic. If you want to come talk about Follett Destiny, you can sit at that table. If you want to come talk about book fairs, you can sit at that table.

**Janette:** I love that part of it, mostly just because you know when you're attending other types of professional development, a lot of it's webinar style, so you don't really have the opportunity. Maybe you are there trying to meet other people so you can set up a time to talk later or connect with people who are in similar situations, even. This allows you the opportunity to do that, whereas you might not in other types of professional development situations. I think the other thing is that a lot of times professional development opportunities aren't extended to paraprofessionals and non-licensed staff, so it's nice to have this time to let them know that they matter and that the work that they're doing is really important.

**Leah:** Yes. And that they deserve support because so many of them are out there doing it without support.

**Janette:** That's what we're here for. In Illinois, that's the library systems. We're here for everyone, not just licensed librarians, not just people with an MLIS. You don't have to be a director. If you have a problem, we are here to support you and help you solve it.

**Leah:** Yes, we are.

**Janette:** This is also, I think, a good connection to an upcoming episode that we have where we're going to talk more about getting connected to other people and organizations and the support network that you can build. The systems are just one piece of that.

**Leah:** I did not connect a lot when I was a school librarian by myself in a building and I really regret that now. This is me back on my soapbox. Please connect. Please connect with someone. It will help you immeasurably.

**Janette:** I feel like I am definitely someone who I'm reluctant to connect or I do that thing where I wonder why people would want to connect with me, like, nah, they don't care. It's fine. I see other people making connections, and I see them having these like really great conversations, but then I'm like, what do I have to add to this?

**Ola:** I think that's probably a thing that most people feel is, well, what value do I bring, right?

**Leah:** Exactly.

**Ola:** I think it's the same thing we talk about, how the things that we do every day as librarians seem obvious to us and we don't view them as special. So just in the same way that you're trying to share what you're doing with your administrators, and things like that, to show your value as a person, too. Your experiences are valuable even though they seem mundane to you. You might have the answer someone's looking for.

**Janette:** That is really true. That's a good point.

**Leah:** All right, so let's get into the meat of this episode. It's just you and I today, Janette. Ola can weigh in when she has very strong feelings about some of these.

**Ola:** [laughs]

**Leah:** We're doing our propaganda, we're not falling for episode because we have a bunch of things that we say to each other all the time about libraries and library service and education and just-- I think we're going to run the gamut and cover a bunch of things.

**Janette:** This is going to just set the tone for season two, right?

**Leah:** Exactly.

**Ola:** We're busting myths.

**Leah:** We are busting myths.

**Janette:** That's us, mythbusters. Yeah, when I was thinking through some of the things to include in this episode, it was like a lot of these are going to be things we've talked about. I'm hoping that a lot of our listeners will share a lot of these same sentiments.

**Leah:** The number one on the list is libraries are only for readers.

**Janette:** \*buzzer\* That's definitely a myth, right? Think about all the things that are in your library that are not books.

**Leah:** Oh, my gosh.

**Janette:** Makerspace, right? You have all kinds of technology.

**Leah:** You have all kinds of kits and objects that make your life easier. For instance, you can check out an American Girl doll.

**Janette:** Yes, like I always love to tell the story about the time when my nephew wanted to play banjo. It's because he checked out a banjo from his library. That's where he found it.

**Leah:** I love that.

**Janette:** Musical instruments, definitely check that out.

**Leah:** My daughter goes to the library to check out parking passes to the beaches around where she lives.

**Janette:** Oh, nice. I like that.

**Ola:** That's amazing.

**Leah:** That is amazing.

**Janette:** It's a great idea.

**Leah:** I've heard of fishing poles. That's another one. Because if you've ever gone fishing-- Now, see, I was raised fishing, and so we always have fishing poles ready to go by our back door. [laughs] We could go find a creek to fish in.

**Janette:** We did, too, right.

**Leah:** If you don't fish regularly, it's an expensive hobby to get into, so go check out a fishing pole, see if you like it first.

**Janette:** When you want to try something out, but you don't know that you want to take the plunge, right? You can go to your library and see, they probably have instruction manuals. They probably have the equipment. They probably have people who can help you learn how to do things, or at least connect you with resources in your community that can help you get started. It's a lot more than just books and more than just reading. Although, definitely go there for the books and the reading.

**Leah:** Yes.

**Ola:** Or different types of books. I feel like my dad first started using the library because he was repairing cars, and they would have all of those thick, heavy car manuals that you would have to find in storage and try not to have it crash on your head and kill you.

[laughter]

**Ola:** But he started just checking those out, and look at him now, he's probably read all of the Polish language fiction section. [laughs]

**Janette:** That's another great point, though. When you need foreign language materials, right? You can't buy a lot of that on the store shelves in America, or it's harder to find certain translations depending on the language you need. But your library, if you ask your librarian for a specific thing and they see a need in their community, they're going to start to grow that part of their collection.

**Leah:** Or they can borrow it for you from another libraries.

**Janette:** Yes.

**Ola:** Thanks to our library systems.

**Leah:** Yes.

**Janette:** All about connecting people with the resources they need. I love librarianship.

**Leah:** Also, just as an aside, all librarians are the best people on earth, so.

**Janette:** Oh, for real, for real.

**Leah:** Definitely have learned that in my years of working as a librarian.

**Janette:** I think going along with all of that, the whole it's not just about books, let's just lay it on the table about audiobooks, right? This is something that I keep, I still continue to see this all over social media, is people complaining that if you're listening to something, you're not actually reading, and [buzzer] again, you are actually reading. It's still the story. You're still hearing it.

**Leah:** You're still processing it the same way.

**Janette:** If you're not trying to learn how to read, there is nothing wrong with hearing a story and then comprehending it that way. It's just a different sensory modality for taking in the same story. I feel like I don't understand this argument ever.

**Leah:** And we can lump graphic novels into that because graphic novels, oh, my gosh, the teachers used to complain to me and complain to me like, "They're only reading graphic novels." I'm like, "You know, some of the graphic novels had the highest Lexiles." They had less words, but they had the higher Lexiles.

**Janette:** It's amazing to me, and I'm not going to get into the weeds of the neuroscience of visual processing because—and poor Ola, whenever I find random stats, I'm always like, "Did you know?" She's like, "Thanks so much, Janette, I appreciate that."

**Ola:** No, I'm saying thanks so much, Janette, I appreciate it!

**Janette:** Your brain can process things visually exponentially faster than it can reading letters versus an image. Graphic novels are 100% reading. Think about, have you ever had a conversation completely in emojis? You know the intent of the emoji. You don't need the actual words. Letters are just symbols, the same as emojis are. It just stands for something else, and you learn to put them together. I'm not trying to discount reading as a skill by any means**.**

**Leah:** You have to be able to read, yes, but--

**Janette:** I mean, graphic novels, they can still tell a story just with a picture and a picture's worth a thousand words, blah, blah, blah, anyway.

**Leah:** Do you remember the book, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, by Brian Selznick?

**Janette:** Yes. Oh, I love-- Yeah.

**Leah:** Yes. Oh, my gosh. That book is obviously a great book, and it was a great movie, but appreciating the art in that book is also an entirely different skillset that they're gaining by looking at that.

**Janette:** Right. I do remember the first time I ever read a book, it was by Laurie Stolarz. I'm trying to remember the title of the book, but I had read the book in its print form. Then she re-released it as a graphic novel. I read the graphic novel in 40 minutes, as opposed to the hours it had taken me to read the novel. I was like, well, why wouldn't every book be like this? Partly, I could see maybe it was easier because I already knew the story, but also just the visual, the picture tells you so much contextually that they don't need words to describe. It just you can look at it and you just know, and you move on and you can pay attention to something completely different about the scene than you do if you're having to read all those descriptive words.

**Leah:** I will say that kids get through graphic novels faster, which is great, but also, as a librarian from their point of view, it's a lot more shelving- [laughs]

**Janette:** Oh, yeah-

**Leah:** -so I understand where the--

**Janette:** -and the demand for graphic novels, right? How do you keep up with that?

**Leah:** It is impossible. The series are 57 books long, and it's really hard to keep up with the series.

**Janette:** They're long series, but the one thing I do love about that genre or the subgenre is that they're developing more and more graphic memoirs. I feel like that's a really great way to capture kids' attention when they didn't maybe want to learn about a specific person in history and their life. You can convey it, and it's much easier to read. If you're doing a report and one of your books is a graphic novel, you can get through it a lot faster.

**Leah:** You still amazingly get all the facts that you need.

**Janette:** Right. And, depending on the type of memory you have, it might be easier to remember where in the story you engaged with a certain fact. If you can remember what the picture it was in looked like, and things like that. I love graphic novels.

**Leah:** I do, too. I always have, even as a kid, I love them. Rereading doesn't count as reading.

[buzzer]

**Leah:** I am a huge rereader. I reread books all the time. There are some books I've probably read a hundred times because I love them so much.

**Janette:** Okay, so here's what I always say when people say rereading isn't reading. If you watch a movie for the 10th time, are you still watching it? It still takes you two hours or however long to sit through your next viewing of Spider-Man.

**Ola:** I bet you don't have every movie or book memorized, right?

**Janette:** No.

**Ola:** You're learning new things or reminding yourself of new details every time.

**Janette:** That's one of my favorite things about rereading is that you do notice different things.

**Leah:** You find these little treasures. When I'm reading a book, if I'm really enjoying it, I'm obviously rushing to get through it so I can find out what happens.

**Janette:** Right, it's the race to the finish.

**Leah:** Yes.

**Ola:** You can savor it.

**Leah:** I can savor those little bits.

**Janette:** The savoring.

**Leah:** It's good for when you're in a reading slump to go back and reread something that you loved and get you going again.

**Janette:** I was just going to ask if you have comfort reads because I do that. If I'm stressed, and maybe I should save this for Shelf Care v , but if I don't know what to read or if I'm particularly stressed, I will go back and read certain favorites.

**Leah:** If I'm having a hard time picking my next book, I will just go find an old favorite to read.

**Janette:** Sometimes, not even the whole book, sometimes I just read certain sections, like if I know I have a favorite scene or a favorite part.

**Leah:** I do. I read passages--

**Janette:** Yes.

**Leah:** --because I just love it or something about it. My number one most re-read book is *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier. I love that book so much. I reread it all the time. Just perfect gothic mystery, great book. I read it as a kid and I loved it then, but now I can read it on my Kindle and the little-- Because it's written like British English, you know what I mean, so a lot of that stuff flew right over my head when I read it as a younger person, but now you can look up what they're talking about so-- [laughs]

**Janette:** The internet is a great thing.

**Leah:** There's a scene where he's going out and a boy on the beach has a handful of winkles. I'm just like, I thought they were candy when I read it the first time, but they're actually little barnacle, like little sea creatures, so fascinating.

**Janette:** Yes.

**Leah:** Okay, judging people by what they read, for instance, saying that romance doesn't count as real books.

[buzzer]

**Janette:** I don't think I always felt like this. I think I was a little bit taught to feel like this, that what I was reading wasn't like a real book because it was just romance. It was just a love story. It wasn't something that was like earth-shattering, life-changing. I'm not saying it had to be self-help, but like a lot of people act as though if it's not on an award list, then it's not worth reading. For some people, I can understand why they stick with award lists. If those are the types of books you enjoy, if you're someone who doesn't have a lot of time to read, like you might be looking for like, hey, what's the best investment of my time? Maybe you start there.

I have always enjoyed reading romance. I like watching rom-coms. I like a good love story in a TV show, a series arc, that kind of thing. So it kind of is a no-brainer, but also-- I think we've talked before about I got started pretty early with my little Harlequin Teen romance and Sweet Valley High. My mom was a romance reader. It was just a thing that I was going to probably always do or that happened in my house, that was fine. I was definitely taught that I should be ashamed of or hide it. That’s a hard thing to outgrow.

**Leah:** My parents never read anything that wasn't pretty literary, and so I didn't read romance until I got older. I remember checking out some paperback romances, even at my library, and they had been on hold. The librarian who was checking out was like, couldn't find them. I go, "I think they're right there." She goes, "Oh, I didn't think you read that kind of book." [laughs]

**Janette:** I was in a situation where, as an adult, we're talking, I was almost 40, someone said to me-- I was reading a book by Richelle Mead. It was if anybody's read the Georgina Kincaid Series, highly recommend, but you have to like paranormal romance, right? It's a series about a succubus. They're just literally like, "Oh, do you enjoy books that are like that?" I was like, "Like what? Which part of this do you want me to be upset about? Do you want me to be upset because it's paranormal, because it probably has adult content? What do you want me to be upset about or embarrassed by?" I don't think they were trying to embarrass me but it was an awkward situation.

**Leah:** I hate that, just like the lady reading Tessa Bailey next to the Bible reader.

**Janette:** Yes, yes.

**Leah:** Which is why another reason Kindles are so great because nobody can see what you're reading.

**Janette:** True. Okay, so let's bring this back to something that's kind of personal for me. How about when people say you shouldn't own more than one copy of a book?

[buzzer]

**Janette:** You guys, I talk about this a lot, how book buying and book reading are not the same two hobbies. I do love a shelf trophy. I will say I just bought another special edition of *Red, White & Royal Blue*.

**Ola:** What's that bring your count up to?

**Janette:** I think I have five, which--

**Leah:** I adore that book.

**Janette:** --I follow someone on Bookstagram, though. I swear she has-- I don't know. She posts her book stack of *Red, White & Royal Blue* only, and it is like, it has to be 20 copies of 20 different editions. I'm like, where and how do you find all of those?

**Ola:** Janette, what book do you own the most copies of?

**Janette:** You will be so surprised to find out it is the *Bridgerton* series.

[laughter]

**Ola:** I am shocked. My jaw is on the floor.

**Leah:** I had no idea that you liked *Bridgerton*, honestly. [laughs]

**Ola:** I didn't even know you liked British television.

**Janette:** What is so funny about *Bridgerton* is I read it on the recommendation of a friend when I lived in Atlanta. That was a long time ago. I owned the mass market paperbacks of *Bridgerton*. Then I was about the time when they started, when the rights were optioned for that, I was considering getting rid of my mass market paperbacks because, honestly, let's be real, this girl cannot read a mass market paperback anymore. My eyesight is not that good. So that’s the first thing to go, right?

When you need to make room on your shelves, you're like, what books can I not read? I can donate those or sell them, or whatever. I was like, I have a complete series. Why would I not get rid of that? Then I was like, oh, I'm not getting rid of that. I have those. I have a couple, like three or four more sets, and there’s another set that's coming out that, of course, I've already pre-ordered. The first three books are coming out in the fall. I'm like, why am I like this?

**Leah:** I used to be like that with the *Outlander* series. I had multiple versions of it, including a signed version. We did a fundraiser, and I contacted her and asked her for an autographed set and she graciously provided it to us. Then I knew it was there so I was determined to win that and I did. [laughs]

**Janette:** That's amazing. Good for you. That's actually one of my favorite, like, do you loan signed copies of your books, right?

**Leah:** Typically no. [chuckles]

**Janette:** I guess I do because I had a friend, she was like, "Oh, I have heard about this *Outlander* series and everyone says that I should read these books, or whatever." I was like, "I have *Outlander*. Do you want to borrow it?" She was like, "Are you sure you don't mind?" I'm like, "Sure." So a couple of days later, I get a phone call. She's like, "Janette." I'm like, "Yeah?" She goes, "This book is signed." And I said, "Yeah." She's like, "I'm going to return this to you immediately." She's like, "I'm just going to get it from the library." I was like, "I don't care." She's like, "If something happens to it--" I'm like, "It'll be fine." So apparently I don't mind loaning my signed books.

**Leah:** My signed books, I have only a few, and I don't lend them out. I usually have another copy. I've gotten to the point in my life where I'm downsizing, so I'm much more likely to have only one copy on the shelf and then a digital copy too, because, as you said, it's much easier to read a digital copy where you can enlarge the print.

**Janette:** AndI love to highlight, but I don't love to annotate in my books. So on my Kindle, I will highlight passages, and I can make notes. I have a Kindle Scribe, so it has a note feature. I can write my thoughts about how I felt during that moment or that scene or what I'm thinking about what's happening in the plot, which I really love, but also, I would never do that to a book. I have friends who buy-- They have these really elaborate annotation setups with all their flags and tabs and markers, and pens. I'm just like, I would never highlight an actual book. I could never. [chuckles]

**Leah:** If somebody ever lends me a book that has been annotated, I get very intimidated by it. [laughs] This is too much for me.

**Janette:** I can remember my kids in school, sometimes their reading assignments were like annotate in the margin of certain passages, right? I was like, "Don't do that. Here's a Post-it note." But it is fun now, though, to find in my personal library, I still have some of those books that they annotated in school and I will-- It's funny to see their little thoughts of what they were thinking when they were reading all those different things.

**Leah:** I want to talk about the fact that people/school administrators say that students or children or kids do not read for pleasure, and for various reasons, either they just don't like it or they don't have time.

[buzzer]

**Janette:** Kids do read for pleasure, or they should and if they don't have time to read for pleasure, I think that says something else about the education system, right?

**Leah:** Exactly. And also, I want to tell those superintendents who say it to me like they just don't use the library. They don't read it. I'm like, of course, they don't. It's all yellow and 40 years old or more. They're gross.

**Janette:** If you don't have books in the library that kids want to want to read, then, yeah, they're not going to come in there. That's where the shrinking budgets of the school library becomes a problem, right? You have to keep adding new material, especially if you're talking fiction. I mean, don't even get started on how nonfiction can get outdated so quickly. If you're talking about fiction, kids talk about-- I mean, BookTok, Bookstagram, like we're talking about all these social media platforms where people are discussing books, and kids have the same access to those things. Like *Dog Man*, those have followings online.

**Leah:** They want the newest and the most exciting, and the things that their friends are talking about. So if you have a copy of *The Wind in the Willows* that is all dusty, [chuckles] they're not going to come read it.

**Janette:** How many times have you been part of an email thread or a listserv discussion where they're like, "Can somebody tell me why there's, suddenly, 30 holds for a certain book?" They're like, "What's going on?" Almost always, it's like an Instagram reel, or a TikTok video, or something.

**Leah:** Or a movie trailer came out, or something like that.

**Janette:** Yeah, prompted it, and you're just like, okay, this makes sense now. But also, as a librarian, how do you navigate that? You've got to somehow find 30 copies of, or figure out like how long you want kids to have to wait.

**Leah:** I used to have to buy 10 or 15 copies of the newest *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. Then at the end of the year-- That's probably a bad example because those never lost popularity, it seemed like, but sometimes when a new copy would come out, and there was a huge line for it, you couldn't really justify buying that many more copies because it's only going to be popular for a very short time. We were always trying to come up with ways to deal with that.

But I think part of the answer to this one is that if you are a school administrator or somebody who cares about students' literacy, and you are observing that students don't want to or can't read, and you don't have a library and/or librarian, and/or library staff, that's the number one thing you can do to improve that situation that you're lamenting about. Librarians live to turn kids on to reading, so [laughs] get yourself one and you'll see.

**Janette:** I feel like there's a million things I could add to that, but it's so simply and perfectly stated. I'm just going to leave it right there because it's just a very complex thing. There's so much that librarians can do.

**Leah:** So the answer for kids not reading is not to say, "Oh well, I guess we don't need all these books." That's not the answer.

Going on to the next one. This is a big one. We don't have to worry about book challenges in Illinois thanks to the law PA 103-0100.

[buzzer]

**Janette:** That's not true.

**Leah:** It's not true. So Illinois is obviously still facing book challenges, and if you add up the individual challenges, Illinois is actually—last year, I think it was 2023. When I last discussed this, it was 2024, so it would have been for year 2023. Illinois was the leader of book challenges individually, not titles and not overall titles banned, but individual one person going to their library to complain about a book.

**Janette:** Now, I will say the good news is it did drop off in 202 4. We're definitely not at the top anymore. I think Oregon maybe has the most challenges in 2024, according to the ALA site, the Office of Intellectual Freedom. In Illinois—okay, so in 2023, let's talk about those numbers. We had 69 book challenges in Illinois, and that was for 204 different titles that were challenged. It's a lot, but I want to say in the Oregon numbers I looked at, which I didn't write down, I apologize, for 2024, they were over 1000.

**Leah:** Oh, my Lord.

**Janette:** It was exponentially higher. In Illinois in 2024, according to ALA, we had 15 attempts for 18 different titles.

**Leah:** However, we know that many of them don't get reported, so those numbers are incomplete, and it’s still, one is too many.

**Janette:** It's still too many.

**Leah:** The law, it is a good thing. I'm not saying that the law is a waste of time. It is not. It is a great law. However, as I learned in the school district in my territory, they can still ban books. All they have to do is decide that they don't want the money from the state library, and they don't have to justify banning a book or taking it off their school shelves, and it's just scary.

**Janette:** I can remember when this law was passed. It was actually really great timing because the ALA annual conference was in Chicago that summer. I think that Secretary Giannoulias even joined ALA to speak for a session and talk about the law. It was such a great moment for Illinois libraries. Also, there was a huge misconception among people from other states asking questions about it, thinking that this meant that there would never be another book challenge in Illinois.

I was like, you can still challenge books. Libraries still have reconsideration policies. It just prohibits you from challenging a book based on religion or racial bias. It was just two very specific kinds of things. What it did was it drastically reduced the number of organizations that were carrying out those nationwide challenges, where they were like, I can't remember what the statistics are, but it was something like there were 10 organizations or something responsible for more than 80% of all the book challenges in the country.

It's a very organized effort. It really cut down on a lot of that. What you had was some of the challenges became more locally focused, so your community would actually bring the challenge. Then it really did prompt, I think, school boards, school districts, administrators, school librarians, public librarians, all of those entities to take a look at their policies to say, okay, so what does happen if somebody wants to challenge a book? Do we have something in place? Many school districts, public library districts were already complying with that law. They didn't even have to make changes to their policies.

**Leah:** But many were not. Many had no policy, which is terrifying in this day and age.

**Janette:** Yeah, it prompted them to create those policies. I would say, maybe Leah, tell me if you agree with this. I think there was a gross misunderstanding that it was trying to take control away from people at the local level.

**Leah:** Yes, and people still believe that, and it is not true. There is still very much local control. All they are saying is that if you select a book that is otherwise appropriate for your library, based on your population served and your age group and your emotional readiness and all of that, you can't take it off because it has a Muslim character, for example, or anything like that. People can still try, and they will still do it. And as I found out, sadly, there are schools that will allow parents to do that. Allow one parent to say they don't want a certain kind of character in their school library, and they will say, "Okay, we just won't take the state money. We would rather censor books," which is sad and scary.

**Janette:** There’s also, because of this law, there's a growing fear that librarians are going to censor materials or censor their selections. We call that soft censorship. What do you think about that?

**Leah:** It's definitely a huge problem in Illinois and everywhere, because do you want to be called out in the local newspaper for putting pornography in school libraries, which is what the complainers say when they come up with a challenge about a book that they don't like that might have more mature content? The Intellectual Freedom Committee that I'm a part of for the Illinois Library Association, we are doing a session at the ILA conference about soft censorship and the chilling effect that this law and the climate in general has on librarians, because they are definitely choosing not to collect a book for their collection if it might lead to an uproar. I think that's the simplest way to say it.

**Janette:** Yeah, I mean there’s a very real fear for librarians, I think, about the pushback. Like, is your administrator going to be upset with you? Does it directly reflect on your job performance? What's the repercussion for selecting a book that could be controversial? I think a lot of times, the path of least resistance is what people choose. And I understand that from a lot of standpoints.

**Leah:** I do too.

**Janette:** But also, we have to, as librarians, ethically make sure that we're representing our communities. So it would be unfair to not select books that are representative of a part of your population, just because another part of your population might object. So it’s like, there’s a very real quandary that librarians face, and it's a difficult time to be a librarian. I sent a librarian friend of mine a sticker that says stop criminalizing librarianship. Ten years ago, I don't think those stickers would have even existed.

But now, to your point about people saying that they're being called groomers and all these other things, and that you're putting pornography in the library, I will tell you 100% your library does not have pornography. Like your child's phone might have pornography, or access to it anyway, more so than a library. Libraries just aren't those types of places. Do we have adult content? Sure, but it's labeled adult content. I think one of my biggest objections is the people who just want to put it over here, put it behind the desk, put it somewhere where kids won't see it, not realizing that, that is a violation of the First Amendment. You can't do that. So you have to be very careful once something's in your collection, how you handle it.

**Leah:** And that’s the other thing that we talk about with the Public Act 103-0100. This happened to me because I was a new librarian. I came into an already stocked library. There were hundreds of books on the shelf that I did not select, so I didn't know anything about them. Every once in a while, I would find a book, and I would think, you know what? This really does not fit here. It's a little too mature. Maybe this belongs in a high school. It's a little much for my sixth through eighth graders.

That's another fear that people have about the law, that they can never take a book off the shelf. But I could prove that it did not fit my collection development policy, so it was very easy to remove a book, and it still remains easy to remove a book that does not fit your collection development policy.

**Janette:** Yeah, I had someone ask me, so if it's not for religion or for racial bias, why else would someone want to remove a book from a collection? I was like, well, if it's found to be harmful to a student or a child psychologically, surely I would hope people would want to challenge those materials. The thing is that you have to be able to prove it. I think there was also a rash of challenges where people weren't even reading the books. They were just being given a list. I was talking about those national organizations that would say, "These are all the things you don't want because they depict all of these things."

Sometimes when you dug into it, you would read the actual scene, and you're like, that’s nothing. Sometimes it wasn't even what was happening. One of my kids, I think, was the one who said to me, "*The Night Kitchen*? Really?" That Maurice Sendak book, where it just shows his little naked bum. You're like, "Really? That? You don't want that in your library because it's a naked butt." Do librarians never censor books? [buzzer] Sometimes they do.

**Leah:** And it’s something that you have to admit to yourself and face, which it is very hard to say, you know, I'm just not going to get that book because I don't want to deal with the headache that comes with it.

**Janette:** Okay, let me ask you this. Do you think all books have a place in the library?

**Leah:** No. And it depends on the library, and it depends on the population that you serve, and it depends on a lot of things. This is another one where librarians are finding themselves stuck and not sure what to do because everybody is arguing, well, if you're going to put one book in the library, you should put a book that has the opposite point of view in the library. But if the opposite point of view is completely factually incorrect--

**Janette:** Yeah, false and made up.

**Leah:** Yeah, false information. I don't think that has a place in the library.

**Janette:** I struggle with this on books that are based on conspiracy theories. Part of me thinks from a historical documentation standpoint, it is interesting to see that there's documentation of that for the masses. That this is a thing that people thought might be true. But also, you have to be very careful how you treat those materials because you really could give someone the wrong impression.

**Leah:** Yes, like this is the fake moon landing. If there's a book about the faked moon landing, and it's shelved right there with the rest of space.

**Janette:** This also goes back to the whole if your collection's outdated, people might think that every computer has a floppy disk drive.

**Leah:** Exactly. [laughs]

**Janette:** You have to be really careful.

**Leah:** Especially for school libraries, you have a very narrow age range, and you have a very specific set of goals. So, no, I don't think that every book has a place in every library. One of my examples is if you belong to a certain religion, and it's not let's say a mainstream religion, I think you should be able to get books about that topic if it interests you, and you want to learn more about it.

**Janette:** I think that's an important way to learn about religions that aren't your own, too. I learned a lot about my friends and the religions that they observe, without them feeling like they have to teach me about their religion. I can just read about the theoretical basis and the theology behind it and all of that.

**Leah:** The other thing is, though, that librarians have a limited budget, so they cannot buy every book to put on the shelf. They have to make choices based on priorities. So if they have the top three religions in their town, those are the books they're going to collect.

**Janette:** Yeah, I mean, your collection is supposed to reflect the people that you serve, so that’s where it becomes very important that you make sure that that's happening.

**Leah:** It's a very fine line to walk between reflecting your population, but not refusing to collect anything that doesn't reflect your population. We could talk about this one for an entire episode and even longer.

**Janette:** An entire series. A whole season.

**Leah:** The next propaganda we're not falling for, you can't read a series out of order.

[buzzer]

**Ola:** Even though that breaks the rules in my heart.

**Leah:** Ola disagrees with us on this.

**Ola:** I don't disagree. I think it's dependent on the series.

**Leah:** It is dependent on the series.

**Ola:** Listen, you can do whatever you want, but should you?

**Janette:** SoI will say this, I've read series where if you read them out of order, you would be very confused. You would not understand, especially if it has a long series arc or things like that. A lot of romance series, especially, are like, each book is about a different couple.

**Ola:** That you can absolutely, yes.

**Janette:** Sometimes, the things in the world, maybe there will be overarching themes that are throughout the series. Maybe there's small spoilers if you read them out of order. But I definitely am guilty of occasionally skipping books, especially if they have tropes I don't like, and I know I'm going to hate it. I'm like, why would I, there's too many books in the world.

**Ola:** Books like that, it's almost like if you read them in order, it's just a little extra Easter egg. It's adding to your experience, but if you read them out of order, you're not losing anything crucial.

**Janette:** Just because you know the destination doesn't mean you understand the journey.

**Ola:** Wow.

**Janette:** So deep.

**Leah:** I will frequently read a romance set of standalones out of order. And then I’m like, I'll read about the heroine's best friend and her husband. Then I go back and read another one, and I'm like, oh, they hated each other at the beginning. [laughs] A little bit of a spoiler, I know they end up--

**Janette:** Sometimes you're confused. You're like, wait a minute. Why are they friends? They're not friends. You're like, oh, they are friends. The funniest thing to me is when you come to a series as it's being written, and then someone else comes to it after it's completed, and they're jumping all over. They're like, "I read book one, then I read book eight, and then I read book four." I'm like, how could you possibly do that? Knowing I had no choice. I had to go one, two, three, because I read them as they came out. It's just so different. I think it's the same thing as TV shows, binging them on Netflix versus when we were growing up, Leah, you waited with bated breath for that next episode of *ER*.

**Leah:** Also, if you missed it, you were out of luck back then, unless you had a way to record it.

**Janette:** It's why must-see TV was a marketing strategy that worked.

**Leah:** Because everybody was home watching it. This one is kind of about the same thing. You have to like every book by your favorite authors.

[buzzer]

**Janette:** You do not.

**Leah:** You do not.

**Ola:** And it hurts to admit it.

**Janette:** It is so sad when one of them just doesn't hit the same.

**Leah:** It is.

**Janette:** You're like, what happened? But you know what? It's understandable.

**Leah:** I especially hate it when they branch out of their genre that I know them for because I'm like, I'm not sure I'm going to like this. But see like, Colleen Hoover, for example, I've only read one book of hers, *Verity*. And I've never read any of her others because when I've tried, I'm like, I don't think I'm going to like this.

**Janette:** Every book has a reader. Do you ever choose not to read a book by an author you enjoy? Aside from that Colleen Hoover example you just gave, do you ever not read a book by an author? Like, "I've loved everything I've ever read by her, but this one book is about something that I don't want to read about." Like it’s a topic you don't like or a trope you don't like. Would you still read it?

**Leah:** Like Rebecca Yarros, I've really gotten into her books. I love her books, but I haven't read the *Fourth Wing*.

**Janette:** Oh, the series? *Empyrean* series.

**Leah:** I haven't read the *Empyrean* series because it's fantasy, and that's not really what I'm used to from her.

**Janette:** It's romantasy.

**Leah:** I will probably like it, but I haven't read it. Here's another one. The movie is better than the book.

[buzzer]

**Janette:** Not always.

**Leah:** Not always.

**Janette:** Almost never, I would say.

**Leah:** Almost never. There is one book that I read that I think the movie is infinitely better. It's *Contact* by Carl Sagan.

**Janette:** Oh, okay. Interesting.

**Leah:** I love the movie. Loved the movie.

**Janette:** It is a good movie.

**Leah:** The book was very thick. They could have edited a lot out of that book. I thought that was a good example, but that's pretty much my only example. Most of the time, I prefer the book.

**Janette:** I usually prefer the book for sure. I will say the closest movie adaptation for me that was almost as good as the book was probably *The Hunger Games*. That trilogy, I feel like, did really, really well. I would say maybe, like, did you ever read *Game of Thrones*?

**Leah:** I read the first book. I think the series is better, honestly. [laughs]

**Janette:** The series is good. That's why I was like, I think it's good, but I also feel like they took creative license, and they ran with some storylines that aren't really in the books. The series isn't even done. George RR Martin's still working away at the series. I think it's the same thing with *Outlander*. Although, full disclosure, I stopped watching the *Outlander* series after season two.

**Leah:** I didn't like the *Outlander* series.

**Janette:** I just didn't want those characters to replace the characters I had already created in my head. Not like I'm saying I could do it better. I'm just saying like, I liked my own view of those characters and my understanding of the stories so much that I didn't really want it to be retold to me by someone who was changing it.

**Ola:** I don't know. Sometimes I have caught myself reading a book and thinking, this story would have been better as a show or a movie.

**Janette:** Oh, I could see that.

**Ola:** I was like, this shouldn't have been a book.

**Janette:** Or it’s so hard to describe with words that watching it would be easier.

**Ola:** Or even in certain things, I think in certain romances where I'm like, oh, no, it's not cute. It's kind of just cringe. Then I'm like, oh, it could have been like *Riverdale* or something. It's for a certain audience-

**Janette:** Oh my gosh, *Riverdale.*

**Ola:** -but not for me.

**Janette:** I really thought I would struggle with *Bridgerton* because of the adaptation being-- a lot of it is very different. They change a lot of the storylines-

**Leah:** They did change a lot of it.

**Janette:** -and the seasons have happened out of order from the series, and things like that, which when you are a purist, it's hard to get on board with some of that. Also, I'm sorry, those are books where there's a lot of sitting around pining for someone. That doesn't translate to good TV. I do love some hardcore pining in a romance novel, but watching someone sit and yearn for someone from afar does really not make good television.

**Leah:** On the other hand, I frequently can enjoy a movie made based on a book. I don't always regret what they've cut out. Sometimes they've made very good choices. I'm like, oh yeah, I can see why they got rid of that. But sometimes I'm just like, what did they do? They butchered it.

**Janette:** It's almost like it has to be so different than the original that it becomes almost a completely separate piece of art.

**Leah:** For example, my kids have never read Harry Potter because they've seen the movies, and they appreciate the movies as the art forms that they are, and so they don't want to ruin that.

**Janette:** How do you feel about fanfic? Do you ever read fanfiction?

**Leah:** I do read fanfiction from time to time.

**Janette:** Because it kind of goes along that same lines. It's taking a world and characters that you already know and manipulating them in a different way. I think you have to disconnect from the original in order to be able to accept it as its own thing. It's basically just like watching a continuation of your favorite show.

**Leah:** Sometimes I like fanfiction because they put the characters in the situation that I wanted for them. [laughs]

**Ola:** I think that's pretty much the purpose of fanfiction.

**Leah:** The next one is, you have to finish every book you start.

[buzzer]

**Leah:** I'm a do-not-finisher.

**Ola:** I can count on one hand how many I have not finished. Gosh, all I've learned about myself throughout this podcast is how much of a rule follower I am. I'm the one who makes the rules, so I don't know why I don't bend them.

**Janette:** I also struggle to not finish books. Once I start, I feel like I have to see it through. There's something about quitting that feels like giving up. There are times, though, where it’s like, this book is not going to get better, or I just can't connect with the story, or I can't get into it. I will say I do have, to Ola's point about rules, I do try to get through at least a quarter or 30% of the book before I will put it down.

**Leah:** I read 50 pages. If I don't like it, if it hasn't hooked me, I ditch it. But I wasn't always like that. That is an older me now that I've realized that I'm not going to live forever, and I can't read them all. [laughs]

**Ola:** I'm hoping one day I can grow up to be just like you, Leah.

**Leah:** I used to tell my kids when I would pick a book for them, I’m like, "Go try it, but if you don't like it, bring it back," especially with kids that you're trying to hook them. If you hate it, don't read it. It's just going to reinforce that you hate reading.

**Ola:** It's so funny because it's so obvious. I would never tell one of my nieces to finish that book if you don't like it. Why can't I tell myself that?

**Janette:** I ask myself that all the time because I don't judge other people for not finishing books that they start. For me, it's almost like I'm looking for a reason wrong with myself why I can't like the book. What is it that I don't like? Sometimes it's just not the right book for you.

**Ola:** Especially if you know other people really liked it.

**Janette:** I do firmly believe every book has a reader. I do also realize sometimes I'm not that reader. That's a hard place to be. I'm like, I want to love everything.

**Leah:** I want to love everything, too. Especially if you really like and respect the person who recommended it to you, and you're just like, I hate this book. Because you know then you're going to have to tell them.

**Janette:** You see all the hype online, and you're like, I don't get the hype. I don't understand why you're all going feral for this book.

**Leah:** Go back to *All the Light We Cannot See*. [laughs]

**Janette:** I loved that book.

**Ola:** Once again, every book has its audience, and we are not all the same.

**Leah:** Okay, so that brings us to Shelf Care. What are you doing to maintain your sanity and take care of yourself right now?

**Janette:** You know what? This is a hard one because I feel like lately I have been more distracted and stressed than I can remember in a long time. For a while there, reading and disassociating was getting me through it, and now that's not really even doing it. I've been trying to pick up a lot of craft projects and things that I had put down, like designing things. I have a vinyl cutter. I also have a laser cutter, so trying to do those types of projects.

It's harder for me because if I don't have a specific purpose-- a lot of times I would make things for gifts or for my kids or whatever. Sometimes, if I don't have that intended outcome, it's harder for me creatively. But I do enjoy just the creative process and getting lost in it. Like when we made the friendship bracelets last year for the AISLE conference, I did pick up my string again and just beaded some stuff. Even though I ended up dumping it at the end, I didn't save them, the process is very relaxing for me. That's what I'm doing. What are you doing, Leah?

**Leah:** This is going to sound so weird coming from me because this is not something I would have said a year ago. I've been trying to make time to A, get outside, and B, exercise.

**Janette:** Those are so important.

**Leah:** A year ago, I would be like, "I hate exercise. I hate being outside."

**Janette:** The two things can be true at the same time. You can still hate it and still do it.

**Leah:** But I haven't been hating it. I've been enjoying it.

**Janette:** That's good. I'm glad.

**Leah:** I've been really liking it. My daughter was telling me this because she really changed her lifestyle, and she goes, "It's horrible. I feel great, which means I have to keep doing it." That's kind of the situation I'm in. So this morning I got up and I went and swam laps at the Y.

**Ola:** Wow.

**Janette:** Nice. Good for you.

**Leah:** It felt great. I'm going to keep doing it as long as it still feels good. We'll keep trying. What about you, Ola?

**Ola:** The last time I did my Shelf Care, I talked about my puzzle and Bravo combo. But lately, I've been seeking out documentaries and docuseries because I find that there's something about that makes me feel so cozy, even though they're usually really morbid. The last one I watched was *The Mortician* on HBO.

**Leah:** I started that. I've just seen the first episode.

**Ola:** This man does some horrible things with dead bodies. For some reason, learning about it brings me so much joy in a weird way. I think it's just learning, and maybe it's also my journalism background. Just hearing weird niche stories fills my cup.

**Leah:** And there’s something about it because we went through a big thing trying to get kids to read nonfiction, and we really leaned into narrative nonfiction. One of the most popular books was about what happens to a body after they die. The information that morticians know about just mortuary science and death and grieving in the United States, I think, not to everybody, but I am with you. I find that fascinating.

**Ola:** I have on several occasions been like, should I become a mortician? Maybe that will be my second career in life. There's something really beautiful about helping families grieve through that time, and honoring bodies and souls and all these things, unless you're the guy who's the subject of the documentary, in which case, that doesn't happen. But I think what makes the docuseries compelling is that they do interview that man, so you see him talking about it. It's just so fascinating. So any morbid, creepy documentary recs, send them my way.

**Leah:** All right. Thank you both for being here.

**Janette:** I'm excited for another great season.

**Leah:** Me too. Thank all of you for listening. If you have questions or topic ideas, please reach out. You can leave us a voicemail on our hotline at 630-734-5015. Until next time, stay legit and don't quit.

[music]

**[01:06:33] [END OF AUDIO]**