

Podcast: The Literaticast

Episode Number: 1

Episode Name: We Are All Imposters, with guest author Laurel Snyder

File Length: 00:35:02

Transcription by Keffy

[00:00:00] Literaticast theme music plays.

Jennifer: [00:00:06] Hello, hello! And welcome to the Literaticast. I'm Jennifer Laughran. I'm a senior agent at the Andrea Brown Literary Agency. This is a brand-new podcast. Welcome. It's gonna be all about kids books, kids book publishing, writing, craft, gossip, maybe. Little House on the Prairie. Murderers. I don't know what we might talk about. All of it. Everything.

[00:00:32] I have lots of publishing world friends who will be joining me throughout these episodes. And today I'm super excited because I'm going to talk to one of my favorite authors I don't rep. She is going to help me answer some questions and we'll get into that in a couple of minutes.

[00:00:48] But before we do, I wanted to say this: many years ago, I was doing a talk at a conference. It was a long talk. Like an hour and a half or something, all about how to work with your literary agent. And at the end, a woman in the front row raised her hand during the Q&A and said, "What is a literary agent?" And I was like, kind of taken aback, honestly, because, hello, I'd just been talking about literary agents for the past hour and a half. But then I realized that maybe people don't know—like, they don't even know what they don't know. Or they kind of know but they're embarrassed to ask for specifics. So, a good place to start.

[00:01:38] A literary agent is much like an actor's Hollywood agent or a sports agent that gets endorsement deals for your favorite sports celebrity. A literary agent works with writers to sell their books to publishers in exchange for a commission on the sale. They negotiate fair contracts. They work on the author's behalf, not just before the book sale but also throughout what can be a very long and fraught process of publishing. I know that I will get more into the specifics of literally what literary agents do as this podcast continues, because that's kind of what it's about. But I felt like that was a great place to start, at least, so we're all on the same page. This is what an agent is.

[00:02:34] So now I feel like I can introduce our main guest.

[00:02:37] Literaticast theme music plays.

Jennifer: [00:02:40] So Laurel Snyder is an author. She also is, full disclosure, one of my best friends and favorite people on earth. Her latest books are *Charlie & Mouse*, a hybrid early-reader picture book from Chronicle Books that will make you smile with delight. It is an absolute joy. Please read it to your preschool age kids. And also, *Orphan Island*. *Orphan Island* is a magical and heart-breaking middle-grade novel. It is just out from Walden Pond Books, which is a division of Harper Collins. I'm not going to jinx this book by saying too much more about it, like, I feel like it exists in a really special place and I just have to say please go read it.

[00:03:28] However, that's not the point. She's not here to talk about her books. She's here to help me give advice.

[00:03:37] So, Laurel, are you there?

Laurel: [00:03:38] I am here and happy to be here.

Jennifer: [00:03:40] Are you ready to give some advice to people?

Laurel: [00:03:43] I am unfortunately always ready to give advice to people.

Jennifer: [00:03:48] I don't think that's unfortunate. I live the same way. Completely ready to give my advice at any provocation.

Laurel: [00:03:57] I am also, it should be said, and I think you are the same way, perfectly willing to admit when I was wrong and/or offer a caveat or whatever.

Jennifer: [00:04:05] Yeah.

Laurel: [00:04:05] To my advice, like, I recognize that my advice is not always good, but I think sometimes it is. Same as [crosstalk 00:04:10].

Jennifer: [00:04:11] No, I think a lot of times it is. Okay. So I had got some questions into the Tumblr that are really kind of author questions, to be honest. So, one is: Hi Jennifer. I just got an agent, which is great. Yay! Congratulations!

Laurel: [00:04:27] Yay!

Jennifer: [00:04:27] Unfortunately, now I am suffering from an acute case of impostor syndrome. I think a lot of female writers may feel like this at a some point and I'm curious if you have any words of wisdom or

encouragement for the newly agented and kind of terrified people out there?

Laurel: [00:04:44] Huh. So, my story is backwards. I sort of was in the process—I basically sent my work out and was in slush and then found an agent. Like, when my slush was going to committee. So I did everything backwards, so I actually didn't have that exact moment of having an agent but not a sale. But I mean, I think the impostor syndrome thing doesn't ever totally go away and the number of times that I have been with somebody I think of as a famous author or an award-winning author or a best-selling author and heard them kind of express self-doubt or that they might not ever write again, or that the next book won't live up to their last book.

[00:05:22] So in some ways, I think the advice is, I hate to say it, but kind of get used to that feeling, that it recurs. Like, well, no, I mean, that's sort of—that's sort of a state that you have to live with that the impostor syndrome is good fortune. That's what that is, is being willing to accept your good fortune. And I do think community helps with that. I think exactly what this—I assume it's a she because she's talking about female authors. I think that reaching out and building a small group of people that you feel you really can be transparent and honest with about those kinds of feelings and being able to share them with other people who are exactly where you are in your career can be really helpful.

[00:06:04] I, just a couple years ago, sort of became part of a small group in a forum situation. And they've become like family to me. You know, and again, you'll progress with those people. So you'll have impostor syndrome as a regularly—

Jennifer: [00:06:20] Group.

Laurel: [00:06:20] Like a midlist self-doubt and then there will be state award lists self-doubt, and then there will be reprint self-doubt or going out of print self-doubt. There are just all of these stages.

Jennifer: [00:06:33] Well, and I mean, I think it's interesting that you say this because I feel like that's absolutely true and a lot of people, especially just starting out, don't really realize that things like rejections still happen constantly even when you're famous. Or like, you're going out of print or whatever. Things go out of print even if you're famous. So these feelings are definitely normal and I can say from an agent's perspective, I see this a lot.

[00:07:06] I think that, you mentioned female writers specifically, and I think it's probably true that maybe a lot of men seem, at least, more naturally confident and willing to accept praise. So, that sometimes, I think, can play out like women feel more reticent to accept good fortune, or something.

Laurel: [00:07:28] Right. I was just reading something today about that, about—it was this piece about sort of pretty privilege that Nic Stone posted on Twitter this morning. And—

Jennifer: [00:07:38] Hmm, I haven't read it yet.

Laurel: [00:07:38] It was really interesting. It was by a trans woman who passes as cis and now has gotten to a point where she has privilege because she's very very beautiful. And what, sort of the, the sort of shift in her brain around that, of like, not ever having had that privilege and now having that privilege. Anyway, it was talking about sort of the self-deprecating comments we make when someone gives us a compliment, like, as women. Somebody says, "Oh, you look so nice." And you go, "Oh, don't look at my zit," or whatever it is. You just don't know how to take the compliment. I think it is the same instinct.

[00:08:12] But I will say, and I have been known to rant ad nauseum about gender stuff, but I have several male friends who are authors who really do experience a lot of this because they don't feel the confidence that they feel like men typically present as having.

Jennifer: [00:08:29] Right.

Laurel: [00:08:30] So that's its own disconnect of like, all the guys seem confident, why don't I feel like them? So, I think we've all got these crazy inadequacy things. And again, they don't go away. The number of times that I've been in a situation where I was on a panel and I looked at the other people on the panel, and I was like, how did I end up here? And then, often, honestly, my agent will say, like, because you belong there. Because you're all mid-list authors with four books out, so what is your damage? Why can't you internalize that you are successful, at least at this level. But I think that that just...

[00:09:08] And the other thing I will say is I know agent relationships are different, but I would say that those are feelings you can share with an agent. Those are—I mean, in an appropriate way. You should have a relationship with your agent where you can be honest and forthcoming and maybe not say, "I am an impostor!" But, you should be able to be vulnerable because your agent is your advocate.

Jennifer: [00:09:33] Yeah. And your agent had heard it all before. Like, in a good way, I think. They might be able to give you some perspective. Like, okay, you are actually famous, that's why you are on this panel.

Laurel: [00:09:42] Right. Right right.

Jennifer: [00:09:42] So, though it's interesting that you actually mentioned the word mid-list, and I'll tell you why. Because my next question has to do with just that. They say, can you talk about mid-stuff on your podcast. I hear a lot about mid-list authors and mid-sized publishers, but I don't have a good idea of what they actually mean? And those are two totally separate things, so I can start with mid-sized publishers.

[00:10:09] Mid-sized publishers are just publishers that are not the hugest, but also are not small presses. So it's exactly what it sounds like. Just what it says on the tin. So, you know, your Harper Collins or Simon & Schuster are huge publishers. They are multi-national corporations with many, many thousands of employees. Your, I don't know, whatever, Small Beer Press or something, might have like three employees or whatever. You know, be tiny. A mid-sized publisher is probably independently owned. I would say, like, Chronicle is a good example of a mid-sized publisher. They make beautiful books. There's nothing wrong with being not huge. They are just smaller.

Laurel: [00:10:53] And I'll add to that that I've had a very, very big range, because I used to poetry, well, I still write poetry, but I used to publish poetry and my first book was actually with Soft Skull Press which is a sort of smaller, like a substantial but small independent that's now under another umbrella. But my first book of poems was with a tiny, tiny, what poetry people call a micropress. Which is basically someone working out of their living room using self-publishing tools to publish other people's work.

Jennifer: [00:11:22] It's like how I'm doing this podcast right now.

Laurel: [00:11:24] That's exactly right. And then I've been at Random House for a number of books and I'm now doing a—Orphan Island was with Harper Collins. But I also then have done books with Tricycle, when Tricycle was still around, and Chronicle, and so, like, I've sort of had this massive range. I will say how many copies a book sells or what kind of publishing promotion you get, what kind of marketing plan, that kind of stuff? That, you can get less from a bigger publisher and more from a smaller publisher. It just depends on the book and it depends on the moment.

Jennifer: [00:11:57] Yeah, for sure.

Laurel: [00:11:58] So, there's nothing wrong with a mid-size publisher or an independent publisher at all.

Jennifer: [00:12:05] Correct. And then, mid-list author. That's something that gets kicked around a lot, this phrase. But I'm afraid that a lot of people kick it around badly. Like, I've heard people say, well, they're just a mid-list author.

Laurel: [00:12:20] Oh no, that's terrible.

Jennifer: [00:12:21] But the thing is, the fact of the matter is, almost everyone is a mid-list author. Like, people who publish books almost uniformly, unless they are the 1% of people who are lead titles, they are regular authors. Mid-list authors.

Laurel: [00:12:37] Well, even somebody who maybe was at one point a best-selling author or won a major award can then be a mid-list author. Like, you can have a spike in your career and then plateau and sort of live in mid-list land forever.

Jennifer: [00:12:51] And that also doesn't mean that you're not totally successful. I mean you can still make plenty of money and sell plenty of books and be a comfortable mid-list author. It doesn't mean you're a failure in any way. It literally means you have a career.

Laurel: [00:13:06] Right. I just think it's funny. It reminds me of middle class. I know people who are food stamps that think of themselves as middle class, and I know people who make hundreds of thousands of dollars a year and think of themselves as middle class. Mid-list is sort of the same thing. That like—

Jennifer: [00:13:19] Yeah. Like, there is a 1% of ubersuccess. You're Neil Gaiman or something like that. And then everybody else is not that. And that's okay. Like—

Laurel: [00:13:30] Or you're emerging. Like, you're emerging until you're mid-list, and then you're mid-list unless you're J.K. Rowling, basically.

Jennifer: [00:13:37] Yeah, exactly. I would say that. So, here is a totally craft question and I literally have no idea how to answer this. But you are a genius so maybe you will.

Laurel: [00:13:47] I'll try.

Jennifer: [00:13:50] So it's advice about middle grade. They say, "Any advice for keeping a middle grade plot moving quickly enough?"

Laurel: [00:14:00] This is the—so, plot is sort of my hard place. It's the—

Jennifer: [00:14:04] Is this the part of the podcast that I should edit out?

Laurel: [00:14:07] No. No, it's not. I think—but it's so funny. I think so many people struggle with this, and actually I'm on the faculty of the MFA program in Children's and Young Adult Writing at Hamlin and it's funny. When we start to talk about plot, every single person on the faculty is like, "Ugh, I'm no good at plot." "Ugh, I'm no good at plot." And it's Laura Ruby and Anne Ursu and, like, people I think, you know Emily Jenkins. People I think of as being very, very good at plotting who are saying this. So I think we all struggle with plot. For me, I have an exercise I do with students, like, with kids, when I do a school visit when we craft a character and then I send them on a journey. We sort of draw a character arc, or a story arc on the wall, and then I basically just set the character in motion and then start asking the character, like, what do you do in this moment?

[00:15:00] So in my experience, if the character has enough of an interior life, if you've done enough of that deep character development, then plot should come from your character's choices in any given moment, right? You should know your character well enough that if the house burns down, you know whether the character runs in to save the baby, saves themselves, pours gasoline on the flames, sort of runs next door to the neighbor's house to call 911. You should know deeply, you should know your character's Meyer-Briggs basically and be able to figure out what your character will do in any given moment, even if it's a small catalyst. And I often find that when the plotting isn't working like that, it's because you haven't really trusted your character's choices. Or you haven't trusted your character to have their own momentum, or you don't know your character deeply enough.

[00:15:53] That said, I remember, I did an MFA in poetry myself, but I remember one of the fiction writers there talking about plot and how hard it can be, this was for an adult fiction program. And I remember her saying sometimes you just have to burn the house down. Sometimes you sort of stall out because you just, it's literally the momentum is stalling out and you need something to act as a catalyst. And sometimes that something can come from outside. So in those places where not enough is going on, sometimes it is time for a terrible storm. Sometimes it is time for a random stranger to show up and hold up the liquor store or whatever. Whatever, depending on the book. A dragon suddenly flies in and starts firing bombs at houses or something.

[00:16:39] So sometimes I think you can do random stuff, but I really, really do think that the most important thing in those moments is to go back to character development and make sure that you know exactly what your character would do in this situation.

Jennifer: [00:16:50] I have two things, if I can remember them. Let's see. So one is, a million years ago, I think maybe around the time that we first met, Laurel, I tried to do NaNoWriMo. And I was like, I can write a novel, no problem. And I am wrong, actually, because it's very difficult and quite boring in my opinion.

Laurel: [00:17:12] It can be really boring.

Jennifer: [00:17:14] So... and I found myself just trying to make wordcount by like adding in... like taking away all the contractions. And like... she is very, very, very happy to be here.

[00:17:30] Anyway. But one of the things that I noticed that was problematic, was that I could write a scene that was full of banter and hilarious and delightful, but then it was really hard to get them out of that room and on to something else. And I realized at that moment that a lot of times you just need to make them go. You just need to start in the next place. So sometimes I find that when I'm reading manuscripts and whatnot, and even sometimes in books, but usually it's in unpublished work, that they just have a hard time with those transitions. And that if they were to just go to the next place, they would find that their plot moved much more quickly.

Laurel: [00:18:08] I have a tendency to have people wake up every morning at the beginning of a chapter. So, it's... and it's a problem. It's like every single chapter opens with, like, she opened her eyes and stared at the ceiling, or like, the next morning over breakfast or whatever. And I think it is—I think it's an important thing to say, that like, sometimes you just have to leap ahead. Two weeks later they were at the carnival, you know. Two weeks later, they were falling down a mountain, or whatever.

Jennifer: [00:18:31] Yeah, I get the waking up, all the time. So, here's the time. I trust that your character brushed their teeth and ate breakfast and got dressed and did whatever. Please get them out the door. I want to see where they're going. That is a pet peeve. But everybody does it. I did it in my NaNoWriMo novel.

Laurel: [00:18:50] Related to that, I often find that if I'm feeling like there's static in a book, I will chop the chapters in half. So if I'm like, on chapter six, I will literally go and see if I can segment those chapters into twelve

chapters, and sort of get myself into smaller, tighter units. Because, there's something about the pacing of that that it starts to pick up speed when the chapters get shorter.

Jennifer: [00:19:14] But then the other thing is, I feel like sometimes with plots like in big terms, people, writers, are writing a wonderful character and you love them, but they're not—they're either not giving their character enough agency. Like, things are happening to them but they aren't doing things themselves or they aren't taking action. Or else they are being too nice to their character. They aren't letting their character really get in trouble, because they like them. And I like them, too, probably. But the problem is that that definitely slows your plot down if you're not willing to let them hurt or let them have an adventure or let them have to solve the puzzle themselves rather than just get an answer from somebody. That can definitely slow things down, I think.

Laurel: [00:20:05] I also think that what you were saying before, about, like, I can write witty banter or whatever. I think that sometimes, and this is definitely not an all the time answer, this is a depending on the situation answer. But I like to play with prose. I can craft a nice sentence all day long. I can start with 100 words and at the end of six hours of writing have 50 words on the page. I can play and tweak and tinker forever. And I think sometimes, if you struggle with plot, I think sometimes what you have to do is really just, almost like, skim writing. Not sit and fiddle and come up with witty banter, you can always do that later. That's the kind of thing you can do on revision, but when you're trying to get that junky first draft, that's where you're putting the scaffold in. You're putting the bones into the story. If you don't let yourself move quickly, if you don't let yourself write on impulse, you get stuck in the prose and then that's what is happening. So sometimes—

Jennifer: [00:21:08] Do you use an outline, yourself, or anything?

Laurel: [00:21:10] I outline, yeah, yeah. But I didn't in the beginning. I feel like I outline a little more with every book. And I think you have to be willing to abandon your outline. Every single book I've written with an outline, ended up in exactly the opposite moment than I thought it was going to end up in. I've just started working on a new book and the same exact thing is already happening. I can see that the end isn't going to be what I thought it was going to be when I set the outline up. But that outline will sort of force your plot and will force those big character changes and things like that.

Jennifer: [00:21:42] Okay, so I've got one more question for you.

Laurel: [00:21:46] All righty.

Jennifer: [00:21:46] This is definitely author-centric. How do you avoid creative burnout?

Laurel: [00:21:53] Oh. Well I would...

Jennifer: [00:21:55] Or you could not. Maybe you don't avoid it.

Laurel: [00:21:57] No, of course I do. Or no, I think, so, I have a couple of answers to that. One is I think it's really really hard for us to accept that sometimes you just have to have a fallow period. And I think when I first started writing sort of as a job, I thought that that was a BS thing people said when they were just too lazy to work. And I didn't believe in writer's block and I didn't believe that you sort of needed to fill the well. I thought that people who said that were covering for themselves being lazy. And then, it's interesting, like, the last few books I have had as I've finished a novel, just, I need time off. And I can't. There has to be a several month period where I'm basically just—it sounds incredibly self-indulgent. But where I am wandering Target and taking bubble baths and binge watching West Wing reruns or whatever it is that I'm doing. And I really do—like, there's literally a day when I wake up and I can't stand myself anymore. I'm so filled with self-loathing at my laziness that I have to go write a book now. And as much as it sounds like garbage, I really think that for me that is part of the process. I have to procrastinate for long enough that now the only way of kind of earning myself back in my own good graces is by sitting down and really putting my nose to the grindstone or whatever.

[00:23:24] So, number one is, sometimes you just burn out for a little while and I think you have to be gentle and generous with yourself. And as long as you're not getting depressed, like, as long as you're not really losing it, I think it's okay to take some time. And to—

Jennifer: [00:23:38] So you say, embrace creative burnout.

Laurel: [00:23:40] Yeah. Just kind of let, or don't embrace the burnout, but do the self-care that you need to do to not be burned out anymore. And set aside the idea that you need to write 2,000 words every day. I'm actually increasingly, I've NaNo—National Novel Writing Month—it has been both successful and unsuccessful for me. I am at a point where, in my life, I don't believe in word count. That thing of 2,000 words a day or whatever it is for different people, that just seems to me to be a way of writing—I have... that is the way that I have written books that are not published. And that doesn't mean that sometimes that's not productive,

but at this moment in my life, that does not feel like the right way to write books.

[00:24:17] And the second thing that I do that helps me with burnout is that I work in multiple genres. So, and only some of them are for children. I also write essays for grown-ups. I have been known—I once made a terrible demo of country songs—

Jennifer: [00:24:33] Nice.

Laurel: [00:24:33] That I recorded with some friends of mine who are musicians. No, they're awful, but—

Jennifer: [00:24:36] Oh, can we hear them, though? Is that a possibility?

Laurel: [00:24:37] Not right this second because I would have to find and access. But yes, at some point somewhere down the road I will share my terrible country songs with you. But I think that for me, when I can't write a novel, I can work on a picture book. And when I can't write a picture book, or I haven't had an idea for a picture book in a number of weeks or whatever, then I will work on a personal essay about—maybe even a personal essay about how I haven't written in a couple weeks. Whatever it is, the point is for me, I believe in the practice of writing. I believe it, like, as people do a yoga practice or a meditation practice. I believe that daily writing of some kind is important. That routine is important for keeping your sense of yourself as a writer, but that it doesn't have to be something you're going to publish. It could just be journaling. It could just be making limericks to go in greeting cards for your friends. It could be anything. I really just think that playing with words on a daily basis is important for craft. But then, again, if I can't write a novel, I can't write a novel. Then I work on something else.

[00:25:40] And I think those two things hand-in-hand. Being generous with yourself and forgiving yourself for the burnout and also then trying to sit down and just write 100 words. Just something in a notebook so you don't lose your sense of yourself as a writer. I have had friends who stopped writing and there's almost always a period where they're sort of like, I don't know if I am a writer anymore. It's been so long since I took this seriously, it's been so long since I published anything. And it's like, well, I've been a writer since I was eight years old and for most of those years I was not publishing. I was a writer because I had a notebook. That's—Harriet the Spy is a writer.

[00:26:18] But that's a fine model. Sometimes you're Harriet the Spy if you're lucky.

Jennifer: [00:26:23] So that's all the questions that I have, but I do want to ask you not about your books, this is not self-promotion corner.

Laurel: [00:26:32] Oh no.

Jennifer: [00:26:32] Although everyone will go read Orphan Island and Charlie & Mouse, I know. But, what are you obsessed with this week?

Laurel: [00:26:42] What am I obsessed with, like, bookishly obsessed with?

Jennifer: [00:26:45] It doesn't have to be book. It could be anything. Like, I'll tell mine.

Laurel: [00:26:48] Okay.

Jennifer: [00:26:48] I am, right now, obsessed with true crime. So, I'm listening to a lot of My Favorite Murder podcast and watching a lot of true crime documentaries. The thing is, I like most normal people, am very terrified of murderers, but I'm very intrigued by reading about them, apparently. So, I am like, really diving deep into weird true crime.

Laurel: [00:27:16] That's pretty interesting.

Jennifer: [00:27:18] So, if you have any recommendations.

Laurel: [00:27:19] I don't know anything about that.

Jennifer: [00:27:20] I don't know. I'm so scared of it, but it's so interesting, I don't know. I guess really I'm paranoid about not just murder but psychopaths. I'm really paranoid about psychopaths, because how do you know if somebody's a psychopath. They probably are and they're covering it up because that's what a psychopath would do. It's a nightmare.

Laurel: [00:27:42] Yeah.

Jennifer: [00:27:42] So...

Laurel: [00:27:44] It's interesting. I'm not afraid of things the way I used to be.

Jennifer: [00:27:47] Well, that's nice for you.

Laurel: [00:27:48] Yeah, I don't know what that's all about. At some point, I just. Maybe I've just accepted my inevitable death and so, like, I'm not scared of it. I don't know. But I have, in my life, had a lot of paranoia and fear and I don't have that right now.

Jennifer: [00:28:06] Maybe it's because you live in a city. I live in the country so it feels like terrible things are probably sneaking up on me.

Laurel: [00:28:14] Yeah, but I live in a neighborhood where people get shot periodically, so you would think that I would be like [crosstalk 00:28:17].

Jennifer: [00:28:17] Yeah, but there are other people around, like if you get in trouble, there are people that might be able to help you. I mean, if a bear comes into my yard, I'm [crosstalk 00:28:25]

Laurel: [00:28:25] No, that's true. You should read—you've read *The Canning Season*, I assume. Have you read *The Canning Season*?

Jennifer: [00:28:33] I did. I only remember one thing about *The Canning Season*, though.

Laurel: [00:28:36] Was it the bears.

Jennifer: [00:28:39] Uh, that—no. Actually.

Laurel: [00:28:41] No, but I have forgotten, I had forgotten how many people get eaten by bears in that book. Perhaps you shouldn't reread it.

Jennifer: [00:28:50] I won't. Anyway. So, what are you obsessed with this week. And it could be bookish, or anything else.

Laurel: [00:28:56] Okay, so I have a couple of things that I am obsessed with. I am, first of all, well, one thing I am obsessed with is not of my own choosing and that is that my children are suddenly interested in something called Warhammer. We did *Magic the Gathering*, we still do. And then we layered into that *Dungeons & Dragons*, which we still do. But now they're interested in something called Warhammer in which they put together—it's almost like plastic models. They put together these tiny little plastic pieces and then paint them and turn them into action figures, which takes a huge amount of time, and then I guess, theoretically somewhere down the line they play a game with them. So this is—it's like all we talk about at—

Jennifer: [00:29:33] Have they not gotten to the game part? They're just doing all the painting?

Laurel: [00:29:37] No, you literally need to put together hundreds of plastic models with superglue and then paint them before you can even think about playing the game. So, this has like overtaken my house. There's like craft supplies everywhere and little bits of felt and cotton balls. They're also making like a board for them to play. I don't even

understand it. So, most of the time in my life now I'm talking about Warhammer with my 10 and 11 year old kids. But that's not, like, my obsession. It's just sort of an obsession that is affecting my life.

[00:30:10] And the book that I have been reading that I'm sort of obsessed with, and I've been going—you know, it's one of those, you know, sometimes you go slowly. I've been going slowly. It's actually an adult book, but it's an adult book called Caroline that follows the same journey that the Little House on the Prairie books do from Ma's perspective. And it's—I know, it's crazy. So, it's like her, I just read the scene where she like, gives birth to Carrie with a stranger lady helping her as Pa takes the girls to go collect Indian beads from the—it's crazy.

Jennifer: [00:30:47] So—

Laurel: [00:30:47] And all the problems that attend to the Little House Books that we talk about politically are part of this book, are problematic in this book.

Jennifer: [00:30:54] So, it's racist.

Laurel: [00:30:56] It is, no it absolutely includes and addresses her feelings about the native cultures that they are essentially stealing from. It is, anyway, this is the point. I can't decide—I am obsessed with it but I can't decide if I like it or I don't like it. Like, I can't decide what I think about this book. How well written it is or whether it's politically acceptable, but it's addressing those things. It's not like just glossing over the fact that she doesn't like Indians. It's digging into them, but it has the same kinds of issues around like, her relationship with Pa. Charles and Caroline have this really messed up relationship where he keeps wanting to go west and she is stuck doing that with him and her life is horrible. It's horrible. And I don't think I ever fully—I don't think I ever thought about how horrible her life must have been. But this book is, that's what it's about. She's madly in love with her husband and she thinks he's amazing, and also she completely resents him and there's all this crazy passive-aggression, and like, yeah. Totally... she's always doing all this work and then Pa's jaunting off to go catch a rabbit or something, and then he comes back eight hours later with a rabbit. He's been wandering around with his gun in the woods or whatever and she's, meanwhile, like, washing all of the clothes and trying to get the mold out of the dugout or whatever it is.

[00:32:18] Anyway, it's a really interesting read. I don't know if I'd recommend it. I picked it up as an advanced copy, and it was sort of a

funny accident that I stumbled onto it, but it's been really affecting my... like, I think about it a lot when I'm not reading. So.

Jennifer: [00:32:33] Well, I guess that's good. I mean, I never had a relationship with the Little House Books. I didn't read them at all because I thought that prairies seemed quite boring.

Laurel: [00:32:41] No, yeah, for sure.

Jennifer: [00:32:42] And then I was not quite old enough for the show, so I remember some episode that I'm sure was probably in reruns, and it was a fire or something and I got really scared. So I never watched the show. So, yeah. I don't know my Little House, but I do know that it seems like a lot of people have problems with it. But maybe it's interesting if they're able to tackle those from a—give it more perspective, or something.

Laurel: [00:33:13] Yeah, I don't know. I haven't, I mean, I'll finish the book and I'll let you know what I think. But anyway, it's fair to say that I'm obsessed with it.

Jennifer: [00:33:19] Okay.

Laurel: [00:33:19] I don't know if I'm obsessed with it and love it, but I'm obsessed with it.

Jennifer: [00:33:24] Yeah, I don't love murderers so it's okay.

Laurel: [00:33:25] Yeah, that's true.

[00:33:26] Literaticast theme music plays.

Laurel: [00:33:26] I definitely don't love Warhammer.

Jennifer: [00:33:30] There you go. All right.

Laurel: [00:33:31] There it is.

Jennifer: [00:33:30] Well, thank you very much for joining me, Laurel.

Laurel: [00:33:34] My great pleasure, always.

Jennifer: [00:33:38] This has been, I admit, at bit of an experiment, because I wanted to see if I could actually pull it together, record, and everything else. And I think it has been kind of successful, so I do plan to do more of these, including talking with some marketing people has been requested. Some editors. Maybe some illustrators. More authors. So it's exciting and if you're a kidlit fan, I hope that you will continue to join me.

[00:34:05] My Twitter is @literaticat and you can find Laurel Snyder's Twitter @laurelsnyder, very creative. And you can find her new book, Orphan Island on bookshelves now. So please go buy it.

[00:34:24] I am not her agent, so I'm allowed to say that. And oh, I guess I'd be allowed to say it no matter what. I'm not her agent. I'm just a big fan. Anyway. Thank you so much and see you next time.