**210325\_FTFP\_Ep 313\_March Madness\_mixdown**

Welcome to From the Front Porch, a conversational podcast about books, small business, and life in the South.

*“She has no idea who will win this series. One of the many ways in which Ruth’s professional self departs from her private self: in basketball, not knowing is ideal.”*

*- Emily Adrian,* The Second Season

I’m Annie Jones, owner of The Bookshelf, an independent bookstore in beautiful downtown Thomasville, Georgia, and today, I’m joined by my husband and fellow March Madness superfan, Jordan Jones.

**Jordan:** [00:00:56] Hi.

**Annie:** [00:00:57] I really hesitated to describe you [00:01:00] as super fan or me as a super fan, because I don't really think that term applies. We're not really super anything. We're not, we're not really extreme people.

**Jordan:** [00:01:10] We're moderate in a lot of ways.

**Annie:** [00:01:12] Yeah. So I hesitated to use the term super fan also, just because that indicates, I think a level of fervor and passion that I'm not sure fully applies to me. Yeah. Um, I just, but I do really love March madness and you love March Madness.

So every year, if you are a new From the Front Porch listener or a new fan of the Bookshelf, Jordan comes on the podcast every year for us to debate discuss kind of our own bookish bracket of sorts and this is a departure from your day job. Do you want to tell people what you do, is that?

**Jordan:** [00:01:53] I mean, it sounds like you don't think it's worth telling. Um, so, so what I do, I work for [00:02:00] a state legislature and I am, uh, the policy chief for the civil justice and property rights sub committee. And so basically I help make sure I'm giving good ideas about what the law should say and, and basically analyzing what bills do and working with representatives, that type of thing.

**Annie:** [00:02:19] So this is different, but utilize those your same skills and abilities. Um, so this is kind of a tradition for us. Last year we muddled through, despite not having an NCAA basketball tournament, we did record one of these episodes. I don't know if you remember that.

**Jordan:** [00:02:39] My stomach, just like the pit of my, I felt something really bad in the pit of my stomach, because I was remembering the day when I was told the tournament was canceled.

**Annie:** [00:02:47] Yeah. It was pretty devastating. I have told people, it was the first realization for me, and I realized how privileged and selfish that sounds, but it was my first realization that, Oh, this is real like, Oh, this is, [00:03:00] this is serious.

**Jordan:** [00:03:00] You're canceling a multimillion or multi. Yeah, I guess multi-million dollar basketball tournament. It probably is serious

**Annie:** [00:03:09] And turns out was, and so March madness still looks different even this year, but it is happening. The NCAA college basketball tournament is happening. Our respective brackets are not great this year.

**Jordan:** [00:03:23] Not too good, as Jan would say, it's not too good.

**Annie:** [00:03:27] So we are struggling through that a little bit. I do think I am potentially in a place where I could beat you this year.

**Jordan:** [00:03:35] Yes. I think you could.

**Annie:** [00:03:36] You have lost your champion. I have, as of this recording, Illinois, because lost.

**Jordan:** [00:03:41] The big 10 is garbage this year. Somebody explain that to me.

**Annie:** [00:03:45] I don't need it explained to me, I think a lot can be blamed on weird circumstances. COVID we've seen several upsets this year and that's not unusual. The March madness is by its very definition mad and [00:04:00] therefore not super predictable, but our, yeah, our basketball brackets.,Um, yeah, they don't look good.

And so, but even, so it's been very fun to watch games and fun, to maybe have a little bit of normalcy in our lives. So Jordan had Illinois as his champion. I have predicted Gonzaga and I think Illinois in my final two, I could be wrong about that. Yeah.

**Jordan:** [00:04:28] But I think we both have the same final two. We just picked a different chance.

**Annie:** [00:04:31] Yeah. Yeah. But I'm really hoping. I feel like I have trusted Gonzaga many times, but I just keep thinking that this really is their year.

**Jordan:** [00:04:37] Gonzaga could do it. I don't understand why either a swing at sister Jean. Like Loyola, Chicago. I mean, I'm 100, one year old woman who prays before the game. Please let our opponent get nervous and confused because we hit good shots. And then that exact thing happened to where the other point guard looks like he's got Vaseline on his hand and we learned nothing.

**Annie:** [00:04:58] Always go with the nuts.

[00:05:00] **Jordan:** [00:04:59] Yes, Come on, Jordan, 2022 Jordan. Remember that.

**Annie:** [00:05:03] So, okay. Here's how this works. We, and by we, I mean, Olivia graciously picked our top 16 bestselling books of, I believe she did maybe the last 12 months.

So the Bookshelf, top 12 best-selling titles and then Olivia seated them. I don't know if she knows that's what, what she did was called, but she, but she seated them and what is very fun to me is Olivia was, uh, respectfully disagreeing a little bit with the March madness bracket setup. She noticed this year for the first time I think that ones are pitted against 16 seats. And she doesn't think that that's equitable.

And Nancy and I were trying to explain, well, you're, you're rewarded for being the best. And, and so we debated that. And so what I think [00:06:00] reflects here in a Lydia's seating is either genre. Like, I think you'll notice she pit genre against genre or she also, well, I actually think that's what she did, genre against genre or, or I think she pit like, book like I'm looking right now. I think one of them is like seat one versus seat two. Like based on, uh, what I know about the bookshelves best-selling titles of the year. Yeah. I think that is what she does. So we're going to start and Jordan, do you want to explain what kind of reader you are?

**Jordan:** [00:06:31] Yeah, so I'm an excellent reader um, if by excellent reader you mean, I read a particular type of book and, um, a limited quantity of books, especially this time of the year, which means I haven't read any of these.

**Annie:** [00:06:47] So to be fair, Jordan is in the throws of a legislative session. We are recording this right. Belatedly, um, on a Sunday evening at about 9:00 PM, uh, which is not really, it might [00:07:00] be your sweet spot.

It is for sure, not mine. This is how much we believe in this, but this is how I'm also, I just kept telling Jordan, we have to record this podcast. So. You have not read any of these titles, which I think the listener might be like, why Annie, are you discussing these books then?

**Jordan:** [00:07:18] Normally I've read up to two or three.

**Annie:** [00:07:22] Yes, that's true. It's just fun to talk to Jordan about it's fun. It's fun to talk to Jordan. And it's now a tradition. And so what we're going to do tonight and Jordan suggested, because I think he was a little bashful about the fact that he hadn't read any of these is we are going, I'm going to try my best.

Again, it is nine, almost 9:30 PM on a Sunday night, but I'm going to do my best to explain and describe to Jordan, these books. And then he is going to decide which one moves to the next round. And we're going to debate these all the way until we reach [00:08:00] what should be like the Bookshelves best selling, well, the bookshelves winning title, I guess.

I don't, because it's not, we already know what the best-selling book of the year was, but like basically our maybe favorite or the From the Front Porch podcast favorite. And then what we're going to try to do is on Instagram, have a series of Instagram stories where you, the listener can vote for your own favorites and we'll kind of do a bracket that way, so.

**Jordan:** [00:08:26] And I also thought, you know, rather than try to be inauthentic and act like I had read them, in 2021, we don't appreciate much. We appreciate authenticity. This is me falling on my sword and saying I have failed and I'm going to be authentic.

**Annie:** [00:08:43] Authentic, and humble.

**Jordan:** [00:08:45] And humble, which I'm never humble.

**Annie:** [00:08:47] I prefer. Uh, so I appreciate your honesty, Jordan. And so we're going to move forward. Are you ready? I'm ready. Okay. So the first matchup is the *Harpy* by [00:09:00] Megan Hunter versus *Southern Book club's Guide to Slaying Vampires* by Grady Hendrix. Do you remember me reading either of these books?

**Jordan:** [00:09:10] I felt like I might remember the second one.

**Annie:** [00:09:12] Okay. So actually I do have an anecdote about the *Harpy* which is a book I think you'll remember when I tell you about it. So the Harpy is by Megan Hunter. I really liked her as an author. She is literary and concise, like her books pack a punch in a pretty slim volume typically. So the Harpy I described to you, because sometimes I will get your help in figuring out and what to read next and late last fall I needed help picking my next book.

And I told you this book is about a woman who finds out her husband has been unfaithful and they agree that they will move forward in their marriage after she exacts-

**Jordan:** [00:09:51] She punishes him. Yeah. Yeah.

**Annie:** [00:09:54] Yes. After she exacts three punishments and you, I will never [00:10:00] forget. Well, I might forget it eventually, but it is still seared into my memory that I described, like a series of books to you, several different titles.

And you looked at me and you were like, read the Harpy next. It sounds light. And it was like, I wonder what?

**Jordan:** [00:10:14] That title it's like, it's like a, like a Sprite or a fairy.

**Annie:** [00:10:17] Well, do you know what a Harpy is? So it's Greek myths and it is a woman who becomes a bird is my understanding because Megan Hunter plays on that in this particular book.

**Jordan:** [00:10:27] I see.

**Annie:** [00:10:28] So in a very slim volume, we get this husband who exacts, I mean, this wife who exempts three punishments on her husband, they become increasingly troubling as the book progresses. It was a book that I really liked. I sent it out as a shelf subscription. It is dark, dark, dark. Like Dark, darker, darkest.

Yeah. It just continues to kind of get progressively more intense and, and progressively more intense and odd because Megan, Hunter is also playing with the myth of the Harpy. And so there's a lot going on in this book, but I [00:11:00] standby loving Megan Hunter's writing style and loving how much she is able to pack in a short number of pages and in a pretty concise way of storytelling.

Like even her sentences are rather sparse. I really like her writing style. So that's the *Harpy*. Okay. *Southern Book club's Guide to Slaying Vampires* is another book that could be and is in parts dark, but I think what sets it apart from the Harpy is there is a real tongue in cheek humor to this book.

This is a book that was totally outside of my genre. I picked it up there. I think you're laughing because you know that it is. Yeah. But I picked it up early pandemic, like I think March or april, because I remember I just wanted to read a few pages to talk about it. For a literary lunch. And instead what happened is I was sitting by the pool and next thing you know, I'd like read the whole thing.

Oh, that's pretty cool. Yeah. I really fell in love with it. I thought it was really funny if you like horror or suspense movies or Riley [00:12:00] Sager books, I think these, this book kind of plays on some of maybe the tropes of horror literature or horror films. I also really loved that this book was set in like the eighties, nineties, and the book club at the heart of the novel was reading, they always read true crime books.

So then they find out that a neighbor has moved in and he is acting suspicious and they discover he is in fact of the vampire and so their book club has to band together and, and read their neighborhood of this vampire.

**Jordan:** [00:12:33] Is he a 16 year old handsome kind of pale?

**Annie:** [00:12:36] He's handsome and pale. He's not 16. He's a grown man. Got it. Uh, I think your understanding of it, the vampires it's solely from Twilight.

**Jordan:** [00:12:43] Yes. Also have not read.

**Annie:** [00:12:45] You have not read, but I think your sister was maybe a fan.

**Jordan:** [00:12:47] I saw a poster once.

**Annie:** [00:12:49] So, okay. So `these two novels, I think Olivia has pitted head to head because of their similarities and maybe they were outside [00:13:00] traditional genre for me. Right? They are maybe dark at first glance. I think the Harpy remains pretty dark. I think Southern Book Clubs Guide has a sense of humor to it and yeah. Oh, it is definitely gory. And it's still a horror book. There are gross vampire.

There's like a scene with rats that I'll never forget. Um, but I think that's why she's maybe pitted these and made them go head to head. So based on my descriptions, which one are you moving forward to the next round?

**Jordan:** [00:13:25] Those were both. Those were sounded interesting. I'm going to have to go with *The Harpy*, partly because I find the conversation about retributive punishment being interesting topics and it sounds like you had to deal with those scenes with this book.

**Annie:** [00:13:38] Absolutely. Yeah, that's accurate. Okay. Good job. So The Harpy moves on. You're going to have to help me remember this. I feel like this typically-

**Jordan:** [00:13:44] I'm looking at the list right here.

**Annie:** [00:13:45] Okay, great. Um, okay. Next, next game is *The Glass Hotel* by Emily St. John Mandel versus *Such a Fun Age* by Kiley Reid.

These are both Annie shelf [00:14:00] subscription titles, which again, I think might be where, uh, Olivia's seating comes in. That's the worst to keep using. Okay. But the Glass Hotel, Olivia and I have kind of joked and I don't want to sell it short, but I would just like to say that that was a book that I read in either late 2019, or early 2020 pre pandemic.

In a post pandemic world, the Glass Hotel is not as striking to me as it was upon first reading. So when I looked at my personal top 20 top 10 books of 2020, the Glass Hotel did not make the list, but at the time I read it, I really liked it.

So Emily St. John Mandel is famous for the book *Station 11*, which is one of my favorite books of last 10 years or whatever. This was her new book. I had high expectations and they were mostly met. It's a quieter book than Station 11. The title of the book gets its name from this hotel in the rural parts of Canada.

And I think the reason that [00:15:00] maybe it's not as clear in my memory, it doesn't stand out as much as some of the other pandemic reading I did is because it is primarily a character driven book rather than a plot driven book and it also. Well, besides being this character driven novel also covers a lot of territory.

Like it almost reminds me of, gosh, I'm trying to think like a movie like Moneyball or what are those movies that we go see? I'm blanking all of a sudden the big short, The Rising of the Big Short, because there is also almost an Enron esque scandal in this book. Yes. Well, And you're like, what does this have to do with anything? When you're reading the book, you're like, what does this have to do with anything? But it's building upon this character development. So that is the Glass Hotel.

**Jordan:** [00:15:47] So now I know for sure this is not the sequel to the glass house.

**Annie:** [00:15:52] No, it is not,

**Jordan:** [00:15:53] it is not.

**Annie:** [00:15:56] Although that was a good, we should have a good Halloween repertoire. [00:16:00] Um, okay. So very different is the book Such a Fun Age. This was also an early shelf subscription pick of 2020, right. I read it though much earlier. I read it summer 2019.

**Jordan:** [00:16:11] I have seen this floating around our house for a while.

**Annie:** [00:16:15] Well, the toe I'm pointing to a tote bag. I have a such a fun age tote bag but I, yeah, but I've had this book for a long time. I read it in 2019 and immediately I must admit that I loved it because I like books that are literary, but accessible. And I thought that Kiley Reid did a really beautiful job of telling this really compelling story that I think book clubs can really enjoy and devour, but also kind of tying in deeper issues of race and class.

So the book opens with a black babysitter taking care of her young ward and like she's called at the last minute to take care of her, her little girl that she cares for and [00:17:00] they go, the family's kind of having a crisis and so she takes a little girl to like a grocery store and, or like a, you know, a late night March kind of thing. And then while they're there, someone accuses her of kidnapping the child.

This is like the first chapter. So you're just immediately kind of. If you are looking for a book that like snags you from page one, this one does because you're in this really intense moment of the cops are being called. The people who work at the store are concerned for the child's safety, but this is her babysitter and has been her babysitter for a long time.

And so then what unfolds is this kind of tension between the babysitter and then the family for which she babysits and, and they're just there as the story certainly goes from there, but that's like the first chapter and it's very striking to me. It's a very, um, compelling first few pages.

So those are your two books, Glass Botel really beautifully [00:18:00] done, but certainly a more character driven, novel and slower pace. And so I'm thinking like maybe a reliable team and then such a fun age is kind of maybe this young basketball team that kind of kind of comes into the tournament and takes the tournament. Yeah, it takes the tournament by storm.

**Jordan:** [00:18:18] I'm going to go with Such a Fun Age because, um, Issues of class interests me and, you know, we tend to historically humans, we tend to destroy each other and kill each other over class. And so if we can instead read a book about class and have a good conversation about it, I'm all for that.

**Annie:** [00:18:36] I think it is a book that I recommended for book clubs, because again, the story itself is really interesting. Like there's just a lot going on. It's it, to me in contrast to glass hotel is plot driven. Like there's, to me there's a lot happening. You're not going to be bored while reading Such a Fun Age yeah. But there are underlying issues of race and class that you could really have wonderful conversations with if your book club about so.

**Jordan:** [00:18:58] Abilene Chris, I mean, Such a Fun Age. Yeah.

[00:19:00] **Annie:** [00:19:00] Such a Fun Age moves forward. Okay. Next game.  *All Adults Here* vs. *Writers & Lovers*. Um, All Adults Here is a book by Emma Straub. *Writers and Lovers* is by Lily King. Uh, both of these books are, gosh, were these both shelves subscriptions too? Maybe they were. All Adults Here falls under the category of dysfunctional family literature to me, which, you know, I really like, you know, I really like.

It is about adult children. It kind of living in this small town and coming to terms with their adulthood, although much later than you might want adults to come to terms with their adulthood.

**Jordan:** [00:19:38] So like a story about our life.

**Annie:** [00:19:41] Like a story, a story about like late millennials are like older millennials and gen X basically. And they're, I love the small town setting of this.

I also will read, I think I have read anything Emma Straub writes. I really liked her. Again, literary, but super [00:20:00] accessible and, and can be, I read, I think our friends at Thank You Books posted an Instagram post the other day that was like, Hey, any book can be a beach book if you take it to the beach.

And I absolutely agree with that, but I also think Emma Straub's books actually really are what I would call. Yes. Like, uh, really they're beach reads, but like, what is the word, elevated beach reads. That's why I love them. Elevated beach reads. Okay.

And then next is *Writers and Lovers*, which I loved. It is about a young woman who is an aspiring writer, but her mother has died. And so ever since then she's been undergoing severe writer's block and obviously induring a lot of grief, she can't focus. She can't write. And in the book, she winds up kind of dating and not even falling in love with, but dating these two men.

Um, but to me, they are, so the plot really is about this young woman, trying to figure out who she is and grappling with her passion and what to do with it now that it feels like it's [00:21:00] gone with the death of her mother and. It was, it was just beautifully oh, so beautifully written. If you heard me talk about the book, *Normal People*, I think this would be a good book for fans of Normal people. Yeah. This one's hard.

**Jordan:** [00:21:13] I think this one's going to go into overtime.

**Annie:** [00:21:15] I think he, Oh yes, absolutely.

**Jordan:** [00:21:16] I think this is an overtime. Which of these do you think would have the overtime edge? Which, which do you think would be happier to get into overtime and push the other into overtime?

**Annie:** [00:21:27] Hmm. I think All Adults Here to me is the spunkier pit. I think Writers and Lovers would be the more slow and steady wins the race.

**Jordan:** [00:21:37] Yeah. Yeah. I think I'm going to have to go with All Adults Here because I think All Adults Here pushes over time and, and it kind of, Writers and Lovers doesn't like that because it shouldn't be pushing it and then, and then All Adults Here wins overtime.

**Annie:** [00:21:50] Okay, so All Adults Here moves on. Okay. Next. Uh, this'll be interesting cause I think these books are re these two books are really different from each other. The first is *The Death of Vivek* [00:22:00] *Oji*. And the next is *Florence Adler Swims Forever* . So The Death of Vivek Oji is one of those books that I finished. I have distinct memories of finishing it in the pool and feeling like I had been punched in the gut.

**Jordan:** [00:22:17] I am so glad that you did not sink and drown.

**Annie:** [00:22:21] Into the pool. I'm feeling like I'd been punched in the gut. Okay. So the author of Vivek Oji is Akwaeke Emezi and they really delivered such a powerful story from page one. So we talked about such a funny age, kind of grabbing you instantly. The story of Vivek Oji does the same thing because the beginning of the novel is a mother opening her door and finding her dead son on her doorstep.

And the book then reflects back to what has led up to this moment and what has led to this act of violence. I thought this book really, because of that [00:23:00] intro, because of that introduction, you really almost have to read this book in one setting. It's all in one sitting because it is so deeply troubling.

Like you want to know what happens. Yes, yes. Yes. You want to know what happened? What happened to this family? It's set in Nigeria, beautifully written and Akwaeke Emezi just consistently puts out beautiful literature. They've got a memoir coming out later this year. So that's the first book.

The next one is *Florence.Adler Swims Forever*. This is my-

**Jordan:** [00:23:36] Did you read this one?

**Annie:** [00:23:37] I did.

**Jordan:** [00:23:37] Okay. You still have-

**Annie:** [00:23:39] I read a lot. Yeah, that's all I did during the pandemic. I'd come home from work at four or four 30 and then read. So Florence Adler Swims Forever is historical fiction, which I am not normally drawn to, but I really like this one. It was about a Jewish family set in the coast, of the coast of New Jersey, I believe.

And [00:24:00] they kind of band together to keep this secret. So this is no spoilers. Truly, this happens within the first chapter, but Florence Adler dies in the first few pages, but her sister is pregnant and is like in the process of giving birth and so the family keeps her death a secret from her sister. And it is if I am not mistaken and I'm really kind of having to think back here, but I believe it is based on a family story of the author.

It is. Really well done. Great. We talk a little bit on the podcast about PG literature. It's great PG literature and a little bit different maybe from traditional, like world war II historical fiction, but I cannot stress enough how different these two books are. They're just very different even in tongue.

**Jordan:** [00:24:46] Do they get paired because somebody dies?

**Annie:** [00:24:48] I wonder if yeah, you immediately kind of find that out from page one and. They just, the tone of the books to me is very different.

**Jordan:** [00:24:58] There was a lot that you said about [00:25:00] both of those. That is, um, intriguing, but the fact that you said that, well, first of all, just the fact that you knew how the death of Vivek Oji, did I pronounce that correctly?

**Annie:** [00:25:14] You did not. I don't, well, you know what? I should have looked it up. Uh, but I think it's, Vivek Oji. Oh, that sounds right. I think I looked it up on previous recording. Yeah, it's a Nigerian.

**Jordan:** [00:25:26] Yeah. Yeah. I'm sure that's right. Oji. So, um, the fact that you remember, you know, the feeling that it gave you, um, and the fact that you felt like you had to read it in one sitting, um, is an interesting thing for you. I, I, I can, I can name a few books that I know you did that with. Um, the last Harry Potter book, um, the, um, Go Set a Watchman. Yeah. And maybe a couple others, but that's a big deal. Yeah. So I'm going to go with that one.

**Annie:** [00:25:58] Okay. So The [00:26:00] Death of Vivek Oji moves forward, then we've got two really interesting non-fiction picks.

So we've got *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox, and the Horse* and this is being pitted against *Wintering*. So T*he Boy, the Mole, the Fox, and the Horse* you've probably seen on our coffee table, if you were paying attention, uh, earlier last year, but it is.

**Jordan:** [00:26:20] You're talking to me, not the public at large?

**Annie:** [00:26:22] Yes They've not been in our home.

**Jordan:** [00:26:23] Because very few people have.

**Annie:** [00:26:25] Yeah, nobody's been here. So it is this really beautiful little coffee table gift book that kind of took the world by storm. I think partly because of when it was released. It has beautiful pen, uh, kind of ink illustrations. And it's almost like a parable or like, it reminds me `most of the story of the Velveteen Rabbit where you know, that there's something deeper happening here.

And it's really a story of resilience. It's really beautifully told, but again, almost like a fable. Yeah. And is definitely accessible to children, but it's certainly [00:27:00] geared toward and has been devoured by adults. It is like, I don't think we're the only people with it on our coffee table.

And then Wintering is a really interesting book. Do you remember a few years ago I read a book I think it was called The Year of Living Danishly. Okay. That's kind of what this book reminds me of where this woman, Katherine May uh, decides to she herself is kind of experiencing what she calls a winter of her soul, a winter of her life.

And she is arguing that every soul goes through different seasons and our natural impulse is to try to just get to like, get rid of it, like to move on to spring. And she's arguing that we should really. Not just endure winter, but maybe relish in it and discover what about it can help us in our next seasons.

So I found, I really loved this book. Uh, I thought it was profound and also, so just deeply interesting because she talked about how different parts of the world [00:28:00] undergo winter and experienced winter, but then tied it into the winters and the seasons of our souls. Yeah. There you go.

**Jordan:** [00:28:07] I think, well, it's a rare day that I'm going to go against a book that you've compared to the Velveteen rabbit, because that's I don't know much more, that would make me emotional than that. Um, maybe Les Mis, um, um, the way that Russell Crowe saying that. Um, but, um, I'm going to have to go with Wintering because th the idea of grief is very interesting to me.

Um, I don't understand enneagram fours, any farther than I can throw you guys, but I do appreciate the fact that you bring to the table some, you know, the idea that, that grief, there is some wisdom in grief. You know, that, that Proverbs, whatever that's, the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of the fools are in the house of laughter. You know, like there there's something to be learned from the winter. [00:29:00] And there's something beautiful that.

**Annie:** [00:29:01] I had not thought of Wintering as an Enneagram four book, but I totally think it is.

**Jordan:** [00:29:05] Oh you didnt?

Yeah, absolutely. There you go. Okay.

`So I just hand sold probably half the listeners on here are four, the other half are five. Other half or five?

**Annie:** [00:29:13] You think? I dont know, I bet we have a lot of ones.

**Jordan:** [00:29:15] That's probably true.

**Annie:** [00:29:17] Yeah. And a lot of nines. Okay. So when train moves on and we're going to now, we're kind of entering maybe the, yeah. We're going to kind of move forward. I don't want to give these books to shorten it to sick, but we're going to move a little quickly.

Okay. So next up are two nonfiction, I guess, depending on where you put poetry as a genre, but *Untamed* by Glennon Doyle, this book was literally everywhere it felt like for, for a few months. And *What Kind of Woman* by Kate Baer, I read these books and loved both of them.

Untamed is by author Glennon Doyle. She is not only an author, but also an influencer, maybe for lack of a better term. There was really an interesting [00:30:00] article written, Oh, a couple of weeks ago, a few months ago, hard to say, earlier this year about people on Instagram who are almost replacing pastoral care and pastoring and Glennon Doyle was named in the article.

And that is certainly the role she kind of plays online is one of, kind of pastor. She kind of shepherds people through, uh, different issues in their lives and Untamed is, if you are familiar with Glennon Doyle's writing style or her memoirs that she has previously written this to me falls in the same trajectory where it's like part self-help, part personal growth, part memoir.

But I really do like Glennon's style of writing. Interestingly, it is to me sort of poetic, which leads us perfectly to What Kind of Woman by Kate Baer. Kate is somebody who I had followed on the internet for years, much like Glennon Doyle, actually. And Kate writes beautiful poetry. You will be familiar with her because you Jordan. Um, because I think I've shown you some of [00:31:00] her poetry that she does based on people's mean DMS and comments.

**Jordan:** [00:31:03] Oh yeah.

**Annie:** [00:31:04] And she blacks out, you know, certain words and then a really gorgeous poem emerges. I struggle with poetry sometimes as a reader. It is not a genre I gravitate toward naturally, but What Kind of Woman, speaking of books that we kind of devour in one setting, What Kind of Woman is a book that I intended to read like one poem at a time and instead I, again sat by our pool and read the whole thing and you should see my copy and you may be happy, but it's just ripped up. It's ripped to shreds from all of the lines that I loved.

**Jordan:** [00:31:36] There's the common denominator here these books, or is it our pool? Like, is there ever been a book you open in our pool that you didn't like?

**Annie:** [00:31:44] Yeah, maybe I just need to be reading. I do love to read outside and during reading slumps that might be the answer. I think you are right. That's what I did a lot in 2020 to be fair. Okay. So what's the verdict here.

**Jordan:** [00:31:58] I'm going to go with What Kind of [00:32:00] Woman. That was that was interesting what you showed me about the poetry and yeah. Especially with the toxicity of that kind of stuff today, the fact that someone could redeem that, um, turn it into beauty. That's an art. That's true art.

**Annie:** [00:32:16] She's amazingly talented. Okay. Next up two books that I do think you will have heard of and been familiar with based on internet friends, my internet friends. I don't know, uh, All Things Considered by or all. I'm sorry. *All Things Reconsidered* by Knox McCoy, this was, if I'm not mistaken, like our best-selling non-fiction book of 2020, versus *The Lazy Genius Way* by Kendra Adachi.

So I think Olivia pitted these against each other, and I think her note even said, tell Kendra and Knox I'm sorry, because Kendra and Knox are friends on the internet and there are two books happen to be two of our best-selling non-fiction titles. They're wonderful about promoting the Bookshelf and about partnering with us.

All Things Reconsidered is Knox McCoy's second book. It is [00:33:00] nonfiction, really asking people to practice the art of reconsideration, really talking about how it is okay and even perhaps important to change our minds. And so the way he talks about that is both silly and serious and sacred. So, and that's really what I love about him.

It's what I like about the podcast. It's what I like about the Bible Binge. Like. They are not afraid to be both silly and sacred and so when he's talking about reconsidering things, it kind of runs the gamut. But I found myself reading this book kind of maybe bingeing it in one weekend, but then reflecting on it further and like sitting in our floor and making notes and whatever. So I really liked Knox's style of writing. He's an enneagram fiv. So I often find myself reflected in the pages of his books.

And then The Lazy Genius Way, it's just an extremely practical book. I talked to Kendra on an episode of From the Front Porch last year, I guess when her book was really about to release. And it is a kind of book my mom would [00:34:00] have loved. And now, because I am my mother's daughter, I also love it. So Kendra is encouraging you to be, um, let me see. I always kind of stumble over her actual like elevator pitch, but she wants you to be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't.

And, and I think she approaches that really wonderfully from speaking from an enneagram one perspective and I think acknowledging that there have been times when she has tried too hard to be a genius about things that don't matter and she's learned from that. And so she's passing along those tips.

I practice, you might not know this, but yeah, I, you, Jordan, I think the Royal you versus you, who I'm talking to, you might not notice, but in our lives I practice a lot of lazy genius principals because they have just kind of infiltrated my brain. And so Kendra has really given people a practical tool for how to rework maybe the systems in their lives.

So those two nonfiction [00:35:00] titles, what you're going with?

**Jordan:** [00:35:00] I'm going to have to go with Lazy Genius Way. We all are, are, uh, passionate, and we're going to spend our life somehow. We're going to do things excellently and things poorly and I think the key to a good life is making sure it's the right things and I think, I think that is a really interesting concept. Yeah.

**Annie:** [00:35:19] You and Kendra would agree. Yeah. All right. So last up, and this is pretend like you get the championship game early, so like maybe Gonzaga.

**Jordan:** [00:35:30] And this is why you don't. Yeah. All right. Everybody knows. Olivia doesn't know yet, but take her aside if you see her on the street and explain to her why you don't pair number one and number two.

**Annie:** [00:35:40] Yeah, this is a, like a number one and number two seat paired against each other. Only one of them can move forward.

**Jordan:** [00:35:46] Punished for being excellent. Okay, great.

**Annie:** [00:35:49] Okay. So the first, so when is *The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett, who was one of my favorite modern writers. Approved, proved herself to be one of my favorites with the release of the second book and [00:36:00] then *Transcendent Kingdom,* also one of my favorite modern writers, also with the release of this second work, this is by Yaa Gyasi. So you might be familiar with me reading these earlier this year. I read one by our pool and I read one on a trip we took to Savannah briefly.

So Vanishing Half is about twin sisters who grew up in this kind of rural small Louisiana town that is populated entirely by Black people. They are two Black.

**Jordan:** [00:36:29] I remember you telling me about.

**Annie:** [00:36:30] Yeah, there are two Black women, but one of them has lighter skin and can pass as a white woman. And so the book kind of, I mean, if you really think about the title, it's fascinating. Okay. So anyway, the book follows both of those sisters, the darker skin sister and the lighter skin sister, and the different paths and different trajectories their life takes when they choose to separate or really when one of them chooses to leave the other.

So that is the Vanishing Half and a lot goes on in that book, but again, accessible literary fiction. [00:37:00] Yeah. Brit Bennett is a stellar, stunning writer, but it is also to me, very accessible for book clubs. And the reason I also mentioned book clubs is book clubs are reading on a time limit, right? You're trying to read something in a month, essentiall and so you want something that you can read through.

**Jordan:** [00:37:14] And for a group with diverse, uh, perspectives and abilities, reading abilities.

**Annie:** [00:37:19] That's exactly right and tastes, different reading tastes. So anyway, I find the Vanishing half to fall into that category. Okay. Okay. Transcendent kingdom is actually a book I think you would love. So this is a book that, um, follows a young woman named Gifty and gifty is a protagonist who will, I think, stick with me a long time, much like the character Mave in the book, The Dutch house.

So Gifty is a young woman who grew up in Alabama, but she was an immigrant and her parents moved to Huntsville, Alabama actually so did Yaa Gyasi so there's some, I think some autobiographical elements there.

[00:38:00] Gifty moves to the West coast. She is practicing to be a neurosurgeon. She's deeply devoted to science, but she was also raised deeply enmeshed in faith, in the Christian faith and so in adulthood, she has really almost let that go in order to pursue science. And as you continue reading the book, you realize the reason Gifty is pursuing science is because she has lost her beloved brother to drug addiction.

And so she has spent, she has spending her adult years now trying to investigate why our brains are wired a certain way and what addiction looks like in the brain. I think, and I talked about this previously on the podcast, Transcendent Kingdom is Yaa Gyasi's second book.

Her first was this really amazing kind of sweeping story that crossed generations and continents and like delved into history and the results of history. And what I think was like big [00:39:00] picture in, in her first book *Homegoing*. Now she like, like zeroes in, on almost a microscopic level into just Gifty and her relationship with her mom and her relationship with her brother.

And then, because I like books that are about faith and doubt and science, I really just fell in love with her story. So that is Transcendent Kingdom. And I can talk about both of those books all day long. There they were my top, they were my top two books of the year in 2020.

**Jordan:** [00:39:26] How did a couple of one seats got paired up in the first round, but it's COVID year, so that

**Annie:** [00:39:31] stuff could really happen.

**Jordan:** [00:39:33] Um, I'm going to go with Vanishing Half because you went on and on about it. And I found it to be an interesting concept.

**Annie:** [00:39:38] Okay. All right. So now we're going to quickly go through who are, who is the first game of the second round? Yep.

**Jordan:** [00:39:47] So the next round week, the Harpy versus Such a Fun Age.

**Annie:** [00:39:51] Okay. To me, this is literary fiction versus, I mean, if we're just really boiling it down and really kind [00:40:00] of generalizing, this is literary dark literary fiction versus conversational book club fiction.

**Jordan:** [00:40:08] yeah, Dark.

**Annie:** [00:40:09] Okay. You're going, you're going dark.

**Jordan:** [00:40:11] Dark horse, The Harpy.

**Annie:** [00:40:13] I think that would be the dark horse in that, in that conversation. So, okay. Almost the underdog in my mind. Okay. So Harpy.

**Jordan:** [00:40:20] Oral Roberts number 15 has just made the sweet 16.

**Annie:** [00:40:24] Did they really just now?

**Jordan:** [00:40:25] They have gone two rounds. I don't think a 15 seat has ever done that.

**Annie:** [00:40:28] Oh my gosh.

**Jordan:** [00:40:29] So, The Harpy is Oral Roberts.

**Annie:** [00:40:30] Real time. You'll be listening. They'll be able to see this on Thursday, but that just happened.

**Jordan:** [00:40:34] Somebody asked me, is it possible that Oral Roberts could play Colgate?

**Annie:** [00:40:40] It wasn't. I picked wrong and I should have picked Oral Roberts. How, how dare.

**Jordan:** [00:40:46] Is our goddaughter picked Oral Roberts two rounds.

**Annie:** [00:40:49] Did she? Shirley? Yeah. Well done. Well then Shirley. Okay. So we picked The Harpy. Who is in the next game?

**Jordan:** [00:40:58] All Adults Here vs. The [00:41:00] Death of Vivek Oji

**Annie:** [00:41:03] Well, I think, I mean, what is your gut?

**Jordan:** [00:41:06] Well, I don't know, honestly.

**Annie:** [00:41:08] I think Vivek Oji. I liked All Adults Here a lot, but I think, I think when it boils down to it, I, I, yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Because remember they only won an overtime.

**Jordan:** [00:41:19] Yeah. Yeah. That's right. Vivek Oji should go to the, um, uh, the final four. This will be yeah, final four. So we have the Harpy and The Death of Vivek Oji.

**Annie:** [00:41:29] You Really struggled with that.

**Jordan:** [00:41:30] I am, I am. Yes, I am struggling with that and I don't know why.

**Annie:** [00:41:35] I know why it's 10 o'clock. Okay. All right. Next, uh, who we at?

**Jordan:** [00:41:42] For a final four spot, we have Wintering versus What Kind of Woman.

**Annie:** [00:41:47] I know who I would want to move on. What kind of Woman. I think those are actually really, that would be the, help me come up with the equivalent. To me, that would be like a [00:42:00] really, even matchup. Like I think I would love actually to hear, love actually, I would actually love to hear. Catherine May the author of Wintering in conversation with Kate Baer.

Like I think their books actually tie in really well together. So, so I think, um, it'd be like when two teams, like, um, like when Abilene Christian had to play Texas or like to interstate rivals have to unexpectedly. Yeah. Like had to unexpectedly play.

**Jordan:** [00:42:28] Yeah, like two coaches. like uh

**Annie:** [00:42:30] Yeah. You know what I'm talking about? Like FSU had to play Florida or something like that, like unexpectedly in the tournament,

**Jordan:** [00:42:37] Texas with Shaka Samar had to play VCU.

**Annie:** [00:42:40] Yeah. Yeah. Something like that. Okay. Next up. Lazy Genius Way versus Vanishing Half. Sorry, Kendra.

**Jordan:** [00:42:48] I think Vanishing Half.

**Annie:** [00:42:49] It does. I'm so sorry for Kendra, but that just to me,

**Jordan:** [00:42:55] Yeah, I heard you talking about that book a lot right? I think it's an interesting thing. So in the final four we had at The [00:43:00] Harpy versus The Death of Vivek Oji and we have, What Kind of Woman versus Vanishing Half.

**Annie:** [00:43:07] Oh no. What Kind of Woman versus Vanishing Half?

**Jordan:** [00:43:10] Right? This is, this is that, you know, Gonzaga, um, Ohio state matchup, except Ohio state went out oral Roberts.

**Annie:** [00:43:18] So, okay. Wait, let's discuss the first pairing first.

**Jordan:** [00:43:21] Blue bloods. It's like Kentucky vs. Duke. Earlier in the year.

**Annie:** [00:43:25] Okay, except not because nobody likes Duke.

**Jordan:** [00:43:27] Well, no, I tolerated it.

**Annie:** [00:43:30] Okay. That's my point. You don't like them, just because they're good doesn't mean people like them.

**Jordan:** [00:43:35] Blue Kahn versus north Carolina.

**Annie:** [00:43:38] Maybe. Okay. So let's just get the first, your first pair. What is it?

**Jordan:** [00:43:42] The Harpy versus The Death of Vivek Oji

**Annie:** [00:43:47] I truly.

**Jordan:** [00:43:47] I did it. I did it.

**Annie:** [00:43:49] You barely did it. Um, I am a little surprised The Harpy has made it this far and I say that as somebody who likes The Harpy a lot, but I feel like The [00:44:00] Death of Vivek Oji moves on.

**Jordan:** [00:44:02] Making it to the final four and then losing like.

**Annie:** [00:44:04] Yes, they had a great, good job the Harpy, like everybody would give them a standing O like they, really.

**Jordan:** [00:44:10] One shot one shining moment. They would get.

**Annie:** [00:44:13] They'd get featured.

**Jordan:** [00:44:14] Vignette.

**Annie:** [00:44:15] Okay. And then we've got?

**Jordan:** [00:44:17] What Kind of Woman versus Vanishing Half

**Annie:** [00:44:20] I can't decide that, this is hard. Those are two excellent.

**Jordan:** [00:44:24] Yeah. Vanishing Half.

**Annie:** [00:44:27] Okay. You decided, oh my gosh. So the change actually, I think Jordan, we did a really good job because that means the championship game is between The Death of Vivek Oji versus the Vanishing Half.

Those are both really great books. They garnered attention, both from critics and from lay readers, which I think is really unusual and hard to do. Um, so these to me are certainly perhaps the most [00:45:00] deserving titles to make it this far. Like I think, yeah, I think they've really proven themselves time and time again. I think they both deserve to be here. Yeah. The question is who comes out on top?

**Jordan:** [00:45:12] Yeah. Is this going to go into overtime? Yeah, I think it went well. So they're evenly matched.

**Annie:** [00:45:17] Yes. These are very evenly matched.

**Jordan:** [00:45:19] I think, um, Vanishing Half wins only because, um, the, the star of the other team bows out. Okay.

**Annie:** [00:45:29] Okay.

**Jordan:** [00:45:30] And, and that goes along with the early death. So somebody went out early, so I'm just thinking.

**Annie:** [00:45:36] Not crass at all. Okay. So I actually would agree with you, to me. I love both of those books, but there is really something special about the Vanishing Half. I also, not that this would play a part except maybe it would, but I think the Vanishing Half has already filmed rights have already sold.

So I think this is about to become a part of the lexicon like I think once it becomes an HBO show, like people are going to know all about it. Oh, it's gonna be [00:46:00] HBO. I think so. Yeah, you're interested speak to them.

And I think that's true. I hope I'm not spreading false information, but I feel like I read that somewhere. So I think it's going to be the book that people remember for a long time. Okay. So I think it's deserved.

**Jordan:** [00:46:13] I've definitely heard you. I mean, we talked about this book before.

**Annie:** [00:46:16] Yeah, we did. Yeah. Okay. We did it. Excellent. Hey, thank you, Jordan. You're welcome.

From the Front Porch is a weekly podcast production of The Bookshelf, an independent bookstore in South Georgia. You can follow The Bookshelf’s daily happenings on Instagram at @bookshelftville, and all the books from today’s episode can be purchased online through our store website, www.bookshelfthomasville.com.

A full transcript of today’s episode can be found at www.fromthefrontporchpodcast.com.

Special thanks to Dylan and his team at Studio D Production for sound and editing and for our theme music, which sets the perfect warm and friendly tone for our Thursday conversations.

This week, I’m reading *The Turnout* by Megan Abbott.

Jordan, what have you been reading?

**Jordan:** [00:47:06] I have been reading, um, Chapter 60, one of Florida statutes, which has to do with timesharing and child support. I wonder what you're reading you. Didn't take out an answer also chapter 70, which is the Bert Harris act.

**Annie:** [00:47:22] Okay, great. Good job.

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[00:48:00] If you liked what you heard on today's episode, tell us by leaving a review on iTunes, or if you're so inclined, support us on Patrion, where you can hear you and my mom made me laugh at this last Section, she did this last week.

**Jordan:** [00:48:44] How did I do that? How did it make you laugh?

**Annie:** [00:48:45] Because you told, you named the Florida statue.

**Jordan:** [00:48:49] Is this still going to be on here. Don't cut this.

**Annie:** [00:48:52] It's up, It's up to Ashley.

**Jordan:** [00:48:53] Don't cut it, Ashley.

**Annie:** [00:48:55] If you liked what you heard on today’s episode, tell us by leaving a review on iTunes. Or, if you’re so inclined, support us on Patreon, where you can hear our staff’s weekly New Release Tuesday conversations, read full book reviews in our monthly Shelf Life newsletter, follow along as Hunter and I conquer a classic, and receive free media mail shipping on all your online book orders. Just go to patreon.com/fromthefrontporch.