

Rogue Librarians, Bonus Episode
Author Rachel Lynn Solomon

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Welcome to a special episode of Rogue Librarians, a podcast in which three librarians discuss banned books.

We are your hosts, Marian, Dorothy, and Alanna.

And we are the Rogue Librarians.

We would love for you to participate in our discussion.

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Today, we are excited to share our interview with Rachel Lynn Solomon about her new young adult novel, *Past Present Future*.

Rachel Lynn Solomon is the New York Times bestselling author of *Today, Tonight, Tomorrow*, *The Ex Talk*, and other romantic comedies for teens and adults.

Originally from Seattle, she's currently navigating expat life in Amsterdam, where she's on a mission to try as many Dutch sweets as possible.

Kirkus Reviews gave *Past Present Future* a starred review, writing, quote, the characterization is strong, Neil's struggles with mental health resonate deeply, and Rowan's insecurities ring true.

What happens after happily ever after isn't perfect, but for these two, it's always achingly real, a gorgeous portrait of two people learning to love themselves before they can truly love each other, end quote.

We are so excited that we had the opportunity to talk with Rachel about her new book.

I've been a fan of hers and have read a couple of her other books, and it was so much fun to get to talk to her about her writing process and to learn more of the history of this book and how she approaches romance novels and characterization.

So I had a lot of fun getting to listen to her.

What did the two of you think?

Oh, I thought she was great.

And, you know, every time we interview an author, I just fall in love with them.

And the books are really fun.

And it gives us more of an insight into the book after we learn a little bit more about the author.

And I think that definitely was true with our conversation with Rachel as well.

And I feel like aspiring writers out there will definitely benefit from hearing this interview and learning a little bit more about her writing process and kind of how she went into the tropes that she chose to use.

And also I'm excited to have a romance author on the pod because romance is starting to get some good credibility with readers.

It's always been kind of the, oh, you read romance, but now it's starting to be something that people are really proud of and starting to be recognized as more of a literary choice.

So that was kind of my takeaway.

What'd you think, Dorothy?

Yeah, this is our second romance and it is, you know, fun since so much of what we read is harder material to process, but I really loved it.

And I always love, you know, I learned so much more about the book itself.

So I always fall more in love with the book after talking with the author or hearing an author talk about it.

So it was a lot of fun.

Absolutely.

Well, without further ado, here is our interview with Rachel Lynn Solomon.

Rachel, thanks so much for joining us on Rogue Librarians today.

Thank you so much for having me.

We are so excited to talk with you.

Congratulations on the June 4th release of your new novel, Past Present Future.

Thank you, I am super excited about it.

I'm sure, and it sounds like you have a fun book tour coming up too.

Yes, yes, I am based in the Netherlands these days, so whenever I go back to the US, I really try to maximize my bookish potential to kind of fit in as much as possible.

That's wonderful.

Well, we absolutely loved your book and we can't wait to discuss it with you.

We wanted to ask you a couple of questions about your background first though.

What was one of the most influential books that you read when you were growing up and why?

The first thing that comes to mind is The Princess Diaries.

I was really obsessed with Meg Cabot.

I read her blog religiously and those books, I mean, I don't know if they age very well with regard to all the pop culture references because Meg Cabot was definitely known for just pumping them full of those.

But yeah, I just connected with them so deeply.

I mean, I think they really get at that feeling of being an outcast so perfectly.

And the potential of being the heir to the throne of a small European principality.

But yeah, they really just hooked me at a young age and I have very fond memories of sitting in a Borders books with the latest copy and my parents getting upset with me because I would read half of it before we even bought it.

And then by the time we got home, I'd be almost finished.

That's wonderful.

Oh my goodness, that is really wonderful.

And you just described my daughter.

That's exactly what she would do.

And I also loved Borders.

I know, RIP.

Yeah.

So can you tell us a little bit about what was your journey to becoming a writer?

It's funny because I, you know, this is a very common question to be asked and I don't remember ever not wanting to be a writer.

You know, like I said, I was reading those Meg Cabot blogs, dreaming of one day having my own, having my own blog that people would pour over, you know, not knowing, of course, that like blogs would not be around forever, at least in the way they were back then.

But I wrote a lot as a teenager.

I mean, I read a lot and I posted some things online, but it never seemed like something you could do seriously as a career.

I didn't know anyone who had creative careers.

It just felt like I had to do something a little more serious.

So when I got to college, I studied journalism because that was still writing, even though you had to tell the truth, kind of ground upon not to.

So I abandoned fiction a little bit.

And I didn't even read very much fiction in college because there just wasn't that much time.

But once I graduated, I kind of found my way back to it, started reading YA again, which I had not read in many, many years.

And yeah, I just sort of wanted to see if I could write a novel.

First thing I wrote was very autobiographical, very cringe.

I don't think I could even look at it at this point.

And then four books later, my debut novel was published.

So there was definitely a bit of a learning curve at the beginning as I was trying to figure out my voice and what I wanted to write.

And also just figuring out how to write a book.

Yeah, would you mind giving our listeners the introduction to your upcoming book, Past, Present, Future?

Yes, so Past, Present, Future is a sequel to Today, Tonight, Tomorrow, which came out four years ago.

And actually just a quick picture of Today, Tonight, Tomorrow.

That book is a romantic comedy about rival overachievers who realize they may actually be in love with each other over 24 hours on the last day of senior year.

So it's an all in one night love story.

And the sequel picks up a few months later and it follows the two main characters as they navigate a long distance relationship during their freshman year of college.

So the first book is really all about kind of big wild romantic moments.

And I think the second one is about those kind of quieter, softer, but still very romantic experiences that you can have with a partner as you're getting to know them on a deeper level.

I think it's a bit more mature than the first one, maybe a bit heavier, but I think it will still satisfy people who enjoyed book one.

Yes, I loved both of them.

And as you said, they're quite different, but they're both wonderful books.

So can you tell us a little bit more why you decided to write the sequel and to tell Rowan's and Neal's stories as they navigate a long distance relationship?

The short answer is that I never planned to.

When you write contemporary books and even more specifically when you write romance, you don't ever plan on multiple books.

I mean, with romance, what's very common are companions, where one book follows one couple and the next follows the main character's friend or sister.

But with this book, I mean, they got together at the end.

So I always felt even at the very beginning when this book came out and people were asking, what happens next?

Would you ever write more about Rowan and Neal?

I always said no, because I didn't wanna have to break them up just to get them back together.

Like it was non-negotiable that they would end this equal still together, but it felt like in order to create conflict, I would have to split them up or have them do something terrible.

And it just felt cheap to me.

And I also didn't wanna do it just to do it.

So, I mean, I've been very, very lucky that this book has continued to find readers over the past four years.

And because of that, you know, I was able to successfully pitch a sequel to my publisher.

But honestly, I was just, I was struggling with a couple other projects I was working on.

And I remember just the pure joy that I had writing Today Tonight Tomorrow.

And then a title came to me.

And I was like, well, if I ever do write a sequel, I have the perfect title.

And I sort of sat with that for maybe six months.

And I don't know, it was just always at the back of my mind.

Like I kept, I have a notes app where I, you know, write down every, you know, little random book idea that I get.

And I kept coming up with scenes and lines of dialogue.

So eventually I just built that out into a longer pitch for my publisher.

And I was worried it maybe didn't have that much of a plot since again, it was really just about them in college, figuring things out.

But I just really love books about two people, like being vulnerable together and slowly opening up and learning more about each other.

So I'm really happy that my publisher was on board.

And that was, the title is the final title.

Yeah.

That's awesome.

Yeah.

Well, in your acknowledgements, you mentioned that Rowan and Neil have been with you in your head at least since 2017.

Have your feelings about the characters changed in any way since then?

And specifically, did they do things in this book that surprised you?

That's a great question.

And as far as my feelings, I have always been so fond of them.

I mean, I think this book is really the one that changed the trajectory of my career because my first two books, which I think might be out of print, they're quite hard to get a hold of, but they are sadder, more serious.

Well, I guess I shouldn't necessarily say the word serious, but they're a bit sadder YA contemporaries.

And Today Tonight Tomorrow was my first romantic comedy.

And I had such a great time writing it that I felt this was the space that I wanted to stay in.

From the very beginning, they just had such a hold on me and their voices were so clear.

The person that Today Tonight Tomorrow was dedicated to, one of my closest friends and critique partners, who just, I remember trading those early chapters with her and never having gotten such an enthusiastic response to any of my work before.

And there's just something about early cheerleaders when you're drafting that is so vital.

And obviously ego pumping can be great for an author, but there's, I think you can tell when you have something that feels a little different and that feels special.

So when I came back to the book, a long time had passed, but their voices were still really clear to me.

In terms of what surprised me, I think Neil's arc in particular was not something that I would have anticipated when I wrote Today Tonight Tomorrow, because he doesn't have a voice in that book.

Today Tonight Tomorrow is single POB, and Past Present Future is dual POB.

So before I started writing it, I didn't really know, I had a vague idea where he was starting the book, but I didn't know where he would end it emotionally.

Obviously there was no doubt that the two of them were still gonna be together, but he would have to overcome some things.

And there's a lot of trauma that he's dealing with that is hinted at in Today Tonight Tomorrow.

And I realized if we're going to be in his head, this has to be in the front seat, because he is clearly not over what's happened to him.

And that was such a powerful arc as well, so.

Yeah, and so our next question actually was about that POV.

So it's interesting to me that the first book was only one because I really enjoyed Neil's voice in this book.

But is it easier for you to write one of the perspectives than the other?

And how did you choose which events to include in their respective chapters?

It can definitely be a challenge.

And actually, my first two books were both dual POVs, so I had done it before.

But I remember after the second one telling myself, I'm never doing this again.

And then, of course, actually, my next YA after PPF is also dual POV.

So I guess I guess I'm back to it.

So I was really lucky in that his voice came easier than I thought because I hadn't written a male POV character in a while.

I think just because, yeah, again, like they just really were ingrained in me from the first draft of Today Tonight Tomorrow.

Yeah, it is tricky sometimes figuring out which chapters to give them.

And some of that did change around.

Like actually, the climax used to be the other POV and that changed intervention.

I really wanted some of a lot of, like I wanted as many like romantic, you know, kissing, et cetera scenes to be in Neil's POV as well.

As possible because they were all in Rowan's POV in the first book.

And then also, I mean, one thing that made it easier was they're at different schools.

So there are certain things that can only take place with one POV or the other.

Sure.

Well, I loved that we got Neil's thoughts on the romantic sections.

It was so great to have a male character who was so thoughtful and to kind of feel like you understood a little bit about what was going on in his head.

Oh, thank you.

That's something that's so important to me, especially as someone writing adult romance as well.

I just feel so strongly about writing beta heroes who are just like absolutely worship the partners and are just so thoughtful and communicative.

And I think communication is just a huge theme of all of my books, because there's something so rewarding and satisfying about two people who maybe can't get it right at first, but then learning together how to make things better for both of them, whether that's in the bedroom or elsewhere.

My whole recent adult romance, *This Is Her Pleasure*, that's essentially the whole plot.

Well, it's always so frustrating to see the old tropes of people just miscommunicating all the time.

So I love that that is growing and changing.

For sure.

Yeah, I loved those scenes too.

And like you said, getting to see people talk about things and make it better for future times, it just seemed much more realistic than a lot of the scenes we get in some other romance novels.

And you mentioned that they're at different schools.

So Rowan's at Emerson in Boston and Neal's at NYU.

And I lived in the Boston area for four years.

So I especially enjoyed seeing your details about some of the places I loved.

Did you spend a lot of time in Boston and or New York?

And if not, what was your research process like and how did you make the settings come alive in each scene?

I really love both of those cities and I've spent, I haven't lived in either, but I have spent a good amount of time there.

I actually got married in Boston, so it will always have a special place in my heart.

Well, honestly, the short answer is I made these decisions in 2017 and I was locked into them when I started writing the sequel.

But I do love both of those cities.

It was a difficult experience because it was the first time writing a book where it largely takes place somewhere I've never lived.

All my other books take place in Seattle.

I'm working on a book now that takes place in Amsterdam.

So yeah, I've spent a lot of time on Google Maps and Google Street View, a lot of research.

I talked to some friends.

I talked to several people who went to both NYU and Emerson and I actually used to work, like remote work for the NYU admissions office, like reading applications.

So I always, I feel like a bit of an attachment to NYU, even though I didn't go there.

So I'm really happy to hear that both settings felt realistic because that was, that was something I was very nervous about.

And I know, especially New York, I think like New York and LA, people will just riot if you say something wrong.

Definitely.

Especially New York.

Yeah.

Well, and I lived in New York for a brief period of time and, you know, definitely didn't get to know the city as well as a native New Yorker would have.

But, but I felt it, New York in particular came alive as well.

And my daughter looked at NYU when she was looking at colleges.

So I had had an opportunity to tour NYU and, you know, you just captured it so well.

But also, I think it's great that your novel focuses on freshman year of college because this is such a time of transitions.

It can be very exciting.

It can be very difficult.

I know what I went through as a mom with both of my children experiencing freshman year away from home and just the challenges that that brought up, not even including a long distance romance.

Why did you choose to set the novel during this time period, especially since you didn't initially plan on a sequel?

Yeah, I think because there aren't very many YA novels that explore people being in a relationship.

There's so much, obviously, yeah, any YA romance ends with the characters getting together.

And there's, I think I've read a couple that's really about like what it's like to be in a relationship, but most of them tend to be bad relationships.

And it's often about like getting out of that bad relationship.

So I wanted to show what it, yeah, how it looks to be in a healthy relationship and these two people figuring it out.

As for why the college setting, I think I duped my publisher into letting me write two college YA's one after the other because See You Yesterday is also set, well, it takes place in a time loop on the first day of freshman year.

So it's the same day, the first day of college over and over again.

Oh my gosh.

It's really, really good.

Love that.

Oh gosh, now I'm dying to read that.

I think there's just, I think teenagers are really hungry for college YA, but for some reason publishers are really reluctant to put it out there.

And also with, you know, new adults kind of having another resurgence, that often doesn't show college in the most realistic way.

I don't feel like everyone having sex in college is having as good of sex as people in new adult books are.

Probably true.

I mean, surely some people and like, you know, good for them, but I think there was room for, there's always room for more realistic college experiences.

Yeah, I like the idea of exploring a whole year.

And then I think I dinked my publisher yet again, because the epilogue is a time jump and the characters are like solidly in their twenties in this YA novel.

So, and then I've even had people ask if I'm going to write another book after this.

And I'm like, so I'm going to publish a YA novel with them in their thirties?

Yeah, I don't think that would be YA.

No.

So one of the things that you delve into in the book is things, for instance, like Rowan's mother's feelings about their relationship and future and worries for her daughter.

Neal's got problems with his feelings about his family and his past.

And Rowan, of course, is confronting some writer's block.

So tell me a little bit about your decision to include these other complicated issues on top of the relationship.

So I tend, when I'm writing, to think of my books as like different strands of a plot.

And when I'm writing romance, the romance is always the main strand.

And then there's also kind of like the personal growth.

And then there's always something with the main character's family or friends.

And then I guess if it's adult, it's usually something career related, but that's often tied into personal growth.

But I feel like those three are really the main ones.

It's sort of the...

And then I guess there might be something external plot-wise, like, you know, time travel, in the case of Steve yesterday.

But so with those three plot strands, I mean, we have their relationship.

We have Rowan's personal journey, which is about her confronting her writer's block and getting past that.

And Neil's personal journey, which is, I guess, sort of tied up in his family, but it also relates to his major a bit.

And then they also have a family component.

So it's something that's kind of like internal, external, and then with other people that is not their relationship, if that makes sense.

And yeah, I mean, especially with Neil, I mean, his father is incarcerated, and that's some, there's a lot of trauma there that he has never dealt with properly.

And so one of the challenges was figuring out how to balance that with Rowan dealing with writer's block, which feels quite light in comparison.

I was really worried when I was writing it that Rowan would just seem, her struggles would just seem so trivial.

But I think one of the best things about writing YA is that whatever the character is dealing with just feels so big and so insurmountable to them.

And especially with these two characters being so in love with each other, they care so much about what the other person is going through.

And there's even a moment at the end where Rowan is telling Neil that she didn't want to share about her writer's block because it felt so inconsequential and him reassuring her that whatever is going on with you matters to me, it's not small.

If it's big to you, then it's big to me.

Yeah, it's just making sure all those strands kind of start in the same place and end in the same place.

That makes a lot of sense.

It does.

I think that that was a really good learning experience for readers to think, you know, no feeling is more important than another feeling.

Feelings are feelings and, you know, they drive our emotions and our wellbeing.

And so whatever it is, you know, it's a big deal to the person who's experiencing it.

But I also thought that, you know, a lot of what she was feeling in terms of her writer's block sort of came from her own insecurities about a long distance relationship and what her mom had said to her before they left about experiencing, you know, don't hold yourself back, experience your full college experience.

And, you know, and wondering if maybe I can't write because I'm in love, you know, maybe I can't write romance.

Like all these questions that popped up for her, I thought were really tied into something a lot deeper.

So, you know, while Writer's Block may have sounded trivial, it did all the reasons that she felt that way were not trivial.

Oh, that's honestly a great way of looking at it.

I think that often readers are so much smarter about books than authors.

People are often finding things that I didn't necessarily intend, but that's, yeah.

And I think going back to that, like three strands of plot, none of them are occurring in a vacuum.

They all are influencing each other.

You can't, maybe it's like a braid instead of like individual strands, because like you can't take one, they're all dependent on each other.

So yeah, she is, her writer's walk is very much tied into her relationship and her, yeah, her fear that she can't write because she's already had like the big epic romance in Today Tonight Tomorrow.

Well, I wanted to ask a little bit more about this strand for Rowan.

I loved her conversation with her creative writing professor, Miranda, when she finally talks to her about how she's been feeling.

And Miranda tells her, writing is rewriting.

Nothing comes out beautifully the first time except for maybe a handful of very unusual writers who we hate naturally.

And Miranda ends the conversation by saying, write badly Rowan, give yourself permission.

I loved those sentiments.

Could you tell us a little bit more why you decided to include that conversation or anything more about focusing on creativity and perfectionism in Rowan's character arc?

You know, a lot of those lines are things that I taught myself.

So maybe it was slightly self-indulgent, but it was something that I had to learn because doing my first few revisions for a publisher after selling my debut novel and then drafting something new, I was comparing it to my other finished products and feeling like, why is, why can I not get this book to a place where I'm happy with?

Why am I spending days and days on this first page?

And I am very much a perfectionist and I really had to give myself permission.

I read Anne Lamott's Bird by Bird and that actually helped me unlock a lot of my own hangups and barricades that I put up.

And that book kind of gave me permission to write a terrible first draft because the first draft of anything does not have to be good.

It really just has to exist.

So all of my first drafts, like I'm not just being modest, they are incoherent.

And because all I tell myself is that it needs to be in the shape of a book and then I can just trust future Rachel to revise and edit it and make those sentences look beautiful.

And yeah, at the beginning, it just needs to be roughly the length of, you know, be roughly 300 pages, usually less on a first draft.

And Rowan coming from such a high achieving background, it felt like something she would need to learn also.

She fortunately learns it a bit earlier than I did.

Mm-hmm.

I just wanna say what you said is another message that everybody needs to hear.

Yeah, I think it's an important lesson for anyone to learn, but especially a writer like you.

And I was so glad you included those parts.

And I loved reading Bird by Bird too.

Oh, and Lamont's one of my all time favorites.

Which takes us into our next question, which addresses, your novel addresses mental health and mental illness in ways that we could all relate to.

So I'm just wondering, because these are very heavy topics, but also extremely important topics, particularly in our post COVID world, where so many people are really struggling with the effects of having been in lockdown and being isolated.

So I'm just wondering why you made that decision to include these topics, and how did you decide to include the therapy?

And by the way, I thought your therapy session was very well written.

Oh, thank you, it's tricky to write without it coming across as like too cliché, or as a, you know, you don't want it to necessarily seem like a crutch for the character to work out their feelings.

You know, mental health and mental illness play a really big role in my books because I am mentally ill as so many of us are.

And I've, you know, dealt with depression and anxiety and OCD since I was a teenager, probably since before then.

But I was really fortunate to have parents who recognized it and got me into therapy and got me on medication when I was in high school.

But when I got to college, everything sort of fell apart.

I became really bad at taking my medication because, you know, I was on my own and no one was telling me to.

And I'll, you know, I only, I went to college only 30 minutes from home, but Rowan and Neil going all the way across the country, it just, it makes sense that they would be struggling.

And especially Neil, who has so many unresolved feelings, it felt natural that that is something that would come up for him and something that he would need to seek treatment for and figure out how to move forward with that in his life.

And I just feel really strongly about including positive, you know, medication and therapy representation in my books, because most of the books I read growing up were not great in that regard.

It was always the cliché therapist who's sitting there being like, but how does that make you feel?

Not an effective therapist.

Right.

Right.

And it was so many characters who were so opposed to going on medication that those characters really stayed with me.

And I feel like they never really interrogated why, but that was such a trademark of YA novels back in the day where characters were just so anti-medication.

And yeah, I think that it would have helped me as a teenager seeing a positive rep of both those things.

And I also just want my books to feel for teens and for adults reading them like a safe place and also a place where people can see their experiences reflected and not just cheap plot points.

Amen to that.

I'm sure we've all read books where the main character goes off their meds and it's this big crisis and of course that happens and that is a serious thing.

But I think it's also very possible to write books, I'm not the only one, where characters are on medication, in therapy, and still living their lives and thriving.

And it's just one part of who they are and not their entire emotional arc.

Absolutely, absolutely.

And let me just say thank you, thank you, thank you for including a male character who seeks out therapy and medication because not only is there a taboo in our society for any mental health care and medication, but particularly for men.

Thank you.

And that's always really important to me too, is putting my male characters in positions that are sort of non-stereotypical of that gender, just to normalize that stuff.

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Absolutely.

Yeah, like I feel like the men cry in all my books.

Yeah.

As they should.

So we know that you've written novels for teens and young adults and adults.

And, you know, this book is marketed as being for people from ages 14 to 99.

But how do you choose, what kinds of details to include specifically in a romance novel for a younger audience?

Because if I might say so, very sexy.

Oh, thank you.

Those were my favorite scenes to read.

So how do you choose?

How do you decide?

Yeah, I mean, it's a fine line deciding what's appropriate for a 99-year-old, but not a 100-year-old.

Yes.

I think it's standard that Simon and Schuster puts that on all their books.

And every time I see it, it cracks me up.

Uh-huh.

Um, so with regard to my adult and YA books and, yeah, particularly concerning sexual content, with YA, I try to focus more on the emotions as opposed to a play-by-play of the actions.

Um, you know, it could definitely be a lot more graphic in adult.

Like, every single movement doesn't have to move the pot forward or reflect something about the character.

But I also, I, all of my YA novels have sex in them.

I've gotten many angry emails about it.

Uh, but I will not stop, because thinking back again to the books that I read as a teenager, it was always things were very chaste or the girl was like pushing the boy away and like very rarely experiencing any kind of desire or, you know, autonomy with regard to her body or just control over the situation.

And I just want to show positive, healthy, consensual sex that teams are having as both as a model for readers who might need it in a way that doesn't feel didactic.

Because I think, you know, looking at the cover of this book, you know, you don't know what's in it.

I have, I'm actually very curious what will happen when this book comes out, because I'm kind of surprised with some of what I was able to get away with.

Yeah, it was definitely more explicit than the original.

And it's so funny because I've been tagged in some reviews that say like, this definitely wasn't YA, and I'm like, I will take that up with my YA publisher.

You know, I mean, I think for me, the bottom line is I wrote it exactly the way I wanted to, and my publisher was fine with that, which I'm so, so grateful for.

It's a YA novel.

It's in the YA section, and I feel like it's definitely on the sexier side, but I don't feel like it's inappropriate.

I don't feel like it's unhealthy, and I 100% stand by it.

Yeah, that's wonderful.

I think it's very healthy, and your characters are 18 years old and going to college.

I listened to a podcast called Hot and Bothered.

They have different iterations of it, but it's about romances.

And what I love that they discuss about romance novels is that it is a way to imagine what a good relationship could look like.

And by writing it down, you kind of manifest it in the world, because other people read it and then they see and then they're like, Oh, I can expect this or that of my loved one.

And then it becomes real.

So I think it's important.

Absolutely.

So I also wanted to ask about the tropes, because I know romance novels are full of tropes.

And Rowan talks about them as she's thinking about what she wants to write.

And of course, the two of them lived the enemies to lovers.

And I think she's got a whole list of tropes there.

So what are your favorite romance tropes?

And how do you decide whether or when to include them in your novels?

So probably not a big surprise that enemies to lovers is my favorite.

I just think that there's no tension that's better than that, really.

When people are at each other's throats, but they can also kiss at any moment, it's just, you know, perfection.

I really love the idea of employing tropes in a way that feels both familiar and refreshing to the reader.

I mean, tropes obviously get a bit of a bad rep, but I mean, tropes are in everything, not just romance.

You know, I mean, tropes are in Star Wars, tropes are in absolutely everything.

So I try to identify a trope that I'm excited about and then see if I can put my own spin on it.

So in *Business or Pleasure*, for example, my adult book that came out last year, it starts with the one night stand trope, which is, you know, two people have a one night stand, and then often like the next day they find out that they're going to be working together or something.

It's usually like, I had the most mind blowing night of my life and now he's my boss.

And I thought, what if it was actually the most awkward night of your life?

And kind of ran with that.

So yeah, with Today, Today, Tomorrow, I because again, that book was like a big escape for me and like a reclamation of joy.

I put in just everything that I thought sounded fun, you know, enemies to lovers, academic rivals, really wanted to write something that took place in 24 hours.

I have a huge, huge fan of Richard Linklater and specifically the Before Sunrise trilogy.

Yes.

That was actually my number one inspiration for Today, Today, Tomorrow.

Yeah.

And, you know, obviously forced proximity, really just kind of a big cauldron of things that I loved.

But I'm, yeah, I often just trying to figure out what have I not done yet and how can I make it a little different.

That's so great.

Your book mentioned that most romance novels end with a happy ending, but we don't usually get to see what happens with those characters later on.

Falling in love is easy.

Staying in love is harder.

And this novel shows us the ups and downs of what love can be after that happy ending.

And you do it in such a beautiful way.

Why did you want to show this to your audience?

And how is your approach to writing this book different from others as a result?

Well, thank you so much for that.

You know, if I can claim, play the self-indulgent card again, I think I got very lucky because Rowan is an aspiring romance author.

And in writing this sequel where I had already given these characters a happy ending, it allowed me to be a little bit better in terms of they already have their big romantic story.

So now what happens?

And trying to figure out where is the romance in what I'm currently writing.

And I actually struggled a bit during the drafting process because there wasn't that newness in that spark of tension when you have a couple that isn't together yet, that I'm always craving and getting really excited about when I'm writing a new book.

So it was trying to figure out, yeah, like, where is the romance in these softer, more everyday moments?

And having her grapple with that on the page just felt, yeah, it felt reflective of her passion for romance novels.

And just I think these books are kind of meta romances.

It was kind of my own way of like justifying the sequel in a way.

Like, here, I wrote this sequel because there can still be romance after book one.

But it did also feel true to the character.

So the follow up question to that is, have you found that writing a sequel is different from writing a standalone novel?

I will say that I'm not racing to do it again.

As much as I love these characters, and I'm sure part of it was just because it was unplanned, and I made all these decisions years ago that I then had to figure out how to deal with, it was actually really challenging in ways I hadn't expected, because on the one hand, I had created this sandbox years ago that I could play in, but I couldn't build anything from scratch.

So I was really limited by the boundaries of the world that I had already set in place.

The plus side of that is of course that I love these characters and I loved having that extra time with them.

But I remember the biggest struggle that I was complaining to my friends, not complaining, but just when I was struggling with the draft, just talking to my friends and saying like, I am worried because there isn't that like spark and that same amount of creativity as when I'm drafting another book or when I'm drafting a book completely from scratch.

And it really relates to what I was saying before about Rowan finding the romance in those everyday moments, because that was what I really focused on in her vision.

I don't think the first draft of the book was very romantic, and I think that's why I was struggling.

So now there's plenty of that, and that helped me quite a bit, because as a romance author, you want to write romance.

So this is a question we ask all of our authors.

In terms of your writing style, are you more of a plotter or a pantser?

I'm definitely a plotter.

Because my first drafts are so messy, I will sketch out an outline and then sketch out a terrible draft, and often things will change, but I can't write without knowing where things are going.

I really recommend the book *Romancing the Beat*.

It's like an 80-page book, but that's how I plot all my romance novels now.

It's super helpful.

Sounds great.

Thank you.

Thank you.

You've already hinted a little bit at what you're working on next, but do you mind telling us a little bit more about one of them or both of them?

For sure.

So the one that I can talk about a little more, I guess, is *My Next Adult Book*, which is coming out May of 2025, and I just finished a big rewrite on it, so it's getting closer.

It's a romantic comedy set in Amsterdam, and it is the tropes, I guess.

It's a second chance romance and also a marriage of convenience.

So it's about a woman who moves to Amsterdam, and everything goes disastrously for her, and she winds up renting a room from the man who used to be, the man who was her first love.

He was a foreign exchange student who lived with their family as teenagers, and they had like a forbidden romance.

And now she needs a way to stay in the country after her job blows up, and he needs to get married to inherit his family's canal house.

So that's what they do.

That sounds awesome.

I really like the idea of like a foreign exchange student romance and having this like forbidden relationship.

I think there was something very delicious there.

Yes.

Yeah, it has maybe my favorite cover of any of my books.

I'm really excited to share that later this year.

Do you have any recommendations for other romance novels that you love?

Yeah.

One book that I really stayed with me over the years is Love Lettering by Kate Claiborne.

It's a really beautiful book that takes place in New York.

The main character does hand lettering and is very into like fonts and signage.

And as someone who also loves just like letters and words.

And then just an all time favorite, they're not really romance, but like Nina LaCour is one of my ultimate favorite authors.

Just everything she writes is so beautiful.

She has this really spare writing style that I wish I could achieve, but I think I'm just a bit wordier.

But my favorite kind of writing is just when someone can say so much with so few words.

Like Sally Rooney's writing is like that too.

And one of the reasons I love that as well, because there's, yeah, I think there's such a beauty in that minimalism.

But I love all of Nina LaCour's YA novels and her adult novel that came out either last year or the year before, Yerba Buena is also fantastic.

Not really a romance, but...

Great.

Thank you.

Wonderful.

All right.

So do you want to tell our listeners where they can find you online?

So I am at rachelsolomonbooks.com and at [R lynn underscore Solomon](#) on Instagram.

Great.

Rachel, thank you so much for talking with us today.

This has been such a wonderful conversation.

Thank you.

This was such a blast.

Good.

We loved having the opportunity to talk with Rachel Lynn Solomon.

You can find Rachel's website and social media links in the show notes.

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Yes.

And finally, thank you to Chris for creating our beautiful music.

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And Dorothy, thanks as always for editing this episode and all of our recent ones.

I don't know how we could do this without you.

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We love you all and we thank you for reading with us because books are meant to be read.