

The Hidden Bookcase Transcript

Thieves by Lucie Bryon

Sorren

Hello bookworms. Before we begin this episode we wanted to take a minute to address the ongoing situation with books being banned from libraries and schools in Florida under last year's bill signed by Governor DeSantis. It specifies that books must be individually vetted before children have access to them: this has led to empty shelves in schools and libraries across the state.

Books dealing with themes of queerness and race are being disproportionately penalised. PEN America found that of books banned in the US between June 2021 and 2022, 41% had LGBTQ themes, protagonists or prominent secondary characters whilst 40% had characters of colour as primary or prominent secondary characters. Books lent out by teachers or librarians that are deemed "pornographic," could land them with a class three felony- this means prison time, and the loss of a right to vote. Family-friendly LGBTQ books are already being stamped with the pornographic label: for example, Richard Peck's *The Best Man* was banned in the Duval County on this basis, because it features a gay wedding. Common Sense Media gave *The Best Man* its lowest rating for Sex, Romance, and Nudity.

These bans are opposed by the majority of US citizens, across the political spectrum. If you too oppose the bans, there's lots you can do to make your voice heard, especially if you're listening from the States. Visit uniteagainstbookbans.org to learn more. You can find this link and additional sources and resources in our shownotes.

We stand with everyone affected by the Don't Say Gay Bill, and by these fascistic book bans. Know that we're with you, and don't give up the fight: and when you need a place to retreat to, you are always welcome through the bookcase.

[THEME MUSIC FADES IN.]

Morgan

Welcome to The Hidden Bookcase: come through and get cosy. Pick a book; your favourite book- that's the one that opens this room. Inside you'll find a warm fire, a loving cat, and a wide skylight to the stars.

Sorren

And a dangerously high "to-be-read" pile.

Morgan

I'm Morgan, I use they/them pronouns, and I am cool looking bird scissors.

Sorren

I'm Sorren, I use he/him pronouns, and I am illicitly acquired ice cream.

Morgan

We've been friends for over a decade and are always swapping books.

Sorren

Each fortnight we take it in turns to recommend one another a favourite read. The first time reader tells us what they know about the book, makes some predictions about what they don't, and then we discuss our thoughts with all of you bookworms. On our shelf this month is graphic novels.

Morgan

So today let's get to talking about...

Sorren

Thieves by Lucy Bryon.

Morgan

Sorren, tell me about Thieves.

Sorren

Thieves follows a teenager named Ella who crashes a party with her friend Leslie. Unbeknownst to her, this party is being hosted by her crush. Ella gets extremely drunk at this party and ends up with a bunch of things from her crush Madeline's house and she doesn't really remember taking them but she has them now. She has to figure out what to do about that just as Madeline appears at the apartment where Ella is currently living.

So Thieves is sapphic, it's young adult, it's fun and cute and soft and

short. I don't have an interesting story behind finding it. I just got a advanced reader copy of it on NetGalley. And then I really liked it. And it's translated from French...

Morgan

Mm-hm!

Sorren

...Which I think is our first translated book.

Morgan

I didn't get that until they started talking about euros at the very end. And then I was like, "Hang on..."

Sorren

(Laughs)

Morgan

(Laughing) "I don't think this is set in the UK or the US."

Sorren

I was trying to figure that out the first time as well. I think I initially thought it was the US just because of the house party culture.

Morgan

Mm.

Sorren

And then there was too much reasonable public transport and I was like "Well this can't be the US."

Morgan

But they do have that whole scene where they're doing French vocab, so...

Sorren

I assume that that was English at one point...

Morgan

Which is quite funny.

Sorren

Which also makes sense because 'Madeline' doesn't know any French. Does she not have any French heritage? And even there's a particularly French name... I can't remember what it is now- Might be Alis? And they're like, "Oh, there's two of them in our class."

Morgan

Yeah.

Sorren

So shall we listen to your blind?

Morgan

Yeah.

[TAPE RECORDER CLICKS ON.]

Morgan

Okay, so I know I always say that I don't know anything about the book we're reading. But this time, I genuinely have no clue. I know that it is contemporary. Maybe romance? I know. It's queer, obviously, because we're doing it. I know it's got... It's got a review by Alice Oseman on the back. so I trust that it's gonna have a good vibe. And I'm obsessed with the art style from the cover. Just especially the person with the round glasses and the fluffy jacket. Yeah, that is literally all I can guess... Wild predictions. I dunno, it's called thieves. Maybe they're thieving each other's hearts! I don't know. Yeah. I'm gonna stop before I embarrass myself.

[TAPE RECORDER CLICKS OFF.]

Morgan

(Laughs) Am I wrong?

Sorren

Did I not have the exact same prediction for Finding Home where I was like, "Well, maybe... They're finding home! With each other!" So, symmetry.

Morgan

There's just also actual thievery.

Sorren

I do also really like the cover. I think it's a good encompassing of the art style and I like the palette.

Morgan

Mm. It tells you a lot about their actual characters.

Sorren

Yeah!

Morgan

Because when you first meet Madeline in the actual book...

Sorren

Mm-hm.

Morgan

She's very much in her customer-facing, people-pleasing...

Sorren

Customer service smile, mm-hm.

Morgan

Yeah, whereas on the cover, she's like, "I will cut you."

Sorren

(Laughs) Yeah.

Morgan

And it's like, "I would die for you instantly. I don't even know anything about you and I'm already obsessed."

Sorren

Also you mentioned her clothes: I love the fashion in this. It's so cute. And they get to do so many little outfits because they're jumping from party to party, and Madeline's clothes in particular are so adorable.

Morgan

Yes. Oh my god. The fur coat on the cover...

Sorren

Yes.

Morgan

Who gets away with wearing a fur coat to school? It's giving Gigi from Booksmart.

Sorren

I really like the style.

Morgan

It's so pretty. It's so cute. It's very reminiscent of Tillie Walden and Alice Oseman, but it's so distinct at the same time.

Sorren

Yeah, I think in my initial review, I said both "If you like Tillie Walden and if you like Alice Oseman you should be reading this. So, same brain cell.

Morgan

(Laughs)

Sorren

But it feels very unique. And I love the way that Bryon draws expressions. They're very expressive. That sounds silly.

Morgan

And there's like a good level of deciding between overly detailed and then they'll have bits which are deliberately drawn a bit more wonky and skewed and less detail because they're supposed to be dynamic, which is a very cool way of doing it.

Sorren

Yeah, precisely. Like sometimes when they're outside at night, the backgrounds will be quite simple, but that works because it draws your focus characters but then some of the interiors are incredibly, incredibly detailed which I absolutely love. I love Ella's studio

Morgan

It's so fun.

Sorren

The little scene where she's showing Madeline around.

Morgan

And it takes her that long to ask Madeline why she's there.

Sorren

(Laughs) Yeah, she's like, "Wait, let me first of all make you tea and give you a tour." Ella has impeccable manners, gonestly. Even if I liked this person I'd be like, "Why are you at my house, though?"

Morgan

(Laughs) Yeah. And the monkey ears that everybody has. The little round ears... They just make everybody more adorable. And the colour palettes!

Sorren

The limited colour palettes is so good- If you can't do full colour, which obviously it's more expensive and a lot more work, so there's many reasons to avoid it. This is such a fun way of getting some colour in and then using it to evoke mood... Having different parties have different colours to like, give them a different feel. And certain transitions like one of my favourite panels is when Madeline is talking to her parents and saying that she's going to look after the house and then it transitions to her at the party. And it's from this soft yellow to this really vibrant, angry red and her expression completely changes from her little customer service to the dead eyes.

Morgan

It's so good.... And all the like, metaphorical drowning bits.

Sorren

Yes!

Morgan

Where like, the tide is rising, ugh, my god!

Sorren

Like Finding Home this has that thing of using the panels to evoke the character like when Ella gets drunk, and they're all shaky and confusing, that's really fun.

Morgan

(Laughs) When they're in the closet together, and the light is like, over their faces in like, the little strips of light.

Sorren

Yeah!

Morgan

And then they've got their hands over each other's mouths! Instantly I was like, "This is- This is perfect."

Sorren

And then Madeleine licks Ella's hand.

Morgan

(Laughs) Iconic behaviour. Honestly, I love her so much.

Sorren

When I picked this up, and I mentioned this in my initial review as well, I was really concerned by the whole... Ella having this crush on a girl she doesn't really know, and from the first impression Madeline gave, I was concerned that she was going to be a cypher. Just depthless and boring to read, honestly. But I think sometimes, you know, romance novels in particular, especially if they have been getting together at the end, which doesn't happen here, they actually get together fairly quickly.

Morgan

Mm.

Sorren

Sometimes one of the characters gets no character, and they're just sort of a "win-state," while the main character has all of the progression. Whereas this is obviously not the case here.

Morgan

Mm.

Sorren

They get together and then they suddenly have to deal with the fact that they are both fully realised people.

Morgan

It reminded me a little bit of Paper Towns...

Sorren

Oh, yeah!

Morgan

Which is the only John Green novel I've ever read, because John Green's brand is very specifically: "Here's a Manic Pixie Dream Girl who the main character is obsessed with!" And the entire book is about him realising that she's a real person.

Sorren

Mm-hm.

Morgan

And not a Manic Pixie Dream Girl, which I really like as a deconstruction of the trope. And there was a lot of that in here, of Ella being like, "Oh, my God, Madeleine, she's perfect. "And then having to come to terms with the fact that Madeline is a real person, and also needs help.

Sorren

Yes.

Morgan

Oh, I love them so much.

Sorren

They're so cute.

Morgan

I was really worried going in, I was really stressed because of the way that they first met.

Sorren

Yeah.

Morgan

The whole like, lying, digging yourself in too far, and then having to turn around, like- I- I know that it's a brand that I'm kind of obsessed with. But I also hate reading it.

Sorren

(Laughs)

Morgan

I was very stressed about that. But then when it turned out that they'd both stolen stuff and so they both sank down onto the level, I was like, "Okay, this is the best way to solve that trope." Because when that trope is solved by somebody being like, "You've got to change!" Hate that. But when the other character is like, "No, I'm also like this."

Sorren

Like, "I stole all that stuff in the first place."

Morgan

"It's fine then. It's a good thing I didn't steal something else that you'd bought properly with your own money."

Sorren

(Laughs) It'd be funny if there was like, one thing that was actually hers and she was like, "Hey, that is mine! Give that back!"

Morgan

Y'know sometimes you just need to thief in order to feel a sense of control over the world.

Sorren

Exactly. And I have to say... Kleptomania's a weird one like, it's in the DSM-V- I don't know if they've talked about whether or not it's going to be in the DSM-VI, because I know that there's a lot of overhaul happening. And I feel like it's a bit weird to separate it from other impulse control disorders. But then I don't know that much about how it presents.

But from what I've heard, people usually have other compulsive behaviours as well. But I do like that this is... It feels a fairly nuanced portrayal of it. I feel like often when characters have an urge to steal, it's either completely played as a joke- which it's kind of played as a joke sometimes here, but not in a way that feels reductive, I think, like it's clearly still an issue, and something that's stressing Madeline out a lot... But in terms of it being a need to exert control, and a thing that she can't herself really control because she clearly does it even when she doesn't

want to be doing it... I can't really think of like a comparative example and everything that I've read, so I appreciated that.

Morgan

I think the only portrayal I've seen of kleptomania, other than this is Season 1, Episode 1 of iZombie.

Sorren

Oh, yeah!

Morgan

It is played as a joke, but also like, there is a lot of empathy for it. Because obviously the main character is experiencing it through the eyes of the character who has kleptomania.

Sorren

Yeah.

Morgan

It's fun to see another portrayal of it.

Sorren

Once they're returning things... Madeline has that slip where she steals something again. And then they have an argument, she kind of explains that it's a compulsion, and not just something that she was doing while she was drunk, and Ella like, accepts and supports her through that, but... It would be really difficult to be like, "And here she is, stopping!" Within the space of this very short graphic novel.

Morgan

Mm.

Sorren

So I'm kind of getting the impression that maybe she still does it by the end of this.

Morgan

Mm.

Sorren

[It] kind of does get left hanging. And I think that maybe some people would find that unsatisfying? I don't really mind it. But it would also be cool to see her get genuine support for that.

Morgan

Would be nice to see her going to therapy.

Sorren

(Laughing) Also Ella who clearly has some kind of anxiety disorder.

Morgan

Ella's just like, "Yeah, I'm fine that I'm living alone at the age of 17. This is fine."

Sorren

She has secret fish. She'll be great.

Morgan

I love the secret fish. How does she hide them from the landlord?

Sorren

Maybe the landlord just never inspects- My landlord never came to see me in my first apartment for like three years. I didn't even get to speak to him I just talked to the management company.

Morgan

Oof.

Sorren

And they never came. (Brightly) Even if the roof was leaking!

Morgan

(Sarcastic noise.)

Sorren

I also love that panel where Madeline is looking at the secret fish and they's kind of misty in the foreground... It's just a very nice panel. The art in this is just so consistently good.

Morgan

Yes, it has like a whimsicality to it.

Sorren

Mm.

Morgan

The scene where they're making each other over to go to the fancy party...

Sorren

Yeah, that's so cute.

Morgan

The way their hairstyles are...

Sorren

And the outfits are so cute. And then I love the diamond detail of the panelling around the fancy party. And then I like that you kind of get the glimpse of Leslie- and if you pay attention in earlier panels you can kind of see a silhouette, I believe, of her.

Morgan

Mm. I do find it a bit funny that Leslie's like "I can't believe you've been going to parties without me," when Leslie's literally at this party without Ella.

Sorren

(Laughs) That's true. To be fair, I imagine it was because it was her boyfriend inviting her to like, a fancy party and she thought that Ella wouldn't be interested."

Morgan

Okay, but still! Little bit of a double standard. I do love Leslie's boyfriend. He's giving big himbo energy.

Sorren

Honestly! Also their couples costume?

Morgan

Mm-hm!

Sorren

Absolutely iconic. Ten out of ten. No notes. And then also the implication that it was them making out in the office before when Madeline and Ella were hiding in the closet.

Morgan

(Laughs)

Sorren

Because apparently, they've just been doing this, which I guess also means that they were at the party? So. yeah, maybe Leslie is- She needs to get off her high horse here. Although, I guess maybe Leslie wasn't actively lying about being at these parties. And Ella would just be like, "Oh, we're chilling at Madeleine's house," Or something?

Morgan

Mm. That's true.

Sorren

But it is very fun when they're combined forces to be gay and do crime.

Morgan

Yes. The fact that Leslie checks the board and is like, "Oh, you guys are missing the thing 'cause you're having a breakdown."

Sorren

"We'll just do it."

Morgan

"We'll go do it for you, it's fine."

Sorren

(Laughing) Love that they make a little conspiracy board, as well.

Morgan

Is it bad that I'd love to see them all pull off a heist?

Sorren

Oh my god, no, that would be so good.

Morgan

It would be amazing.

Sorren

I think they should just do more crime.

Morgan

If you're gonna steal you may as well go big or go home.

Sorren

Exactly, just continue to steal from grumpy people, as Mollymauk Tealeaf has put it.

Morgan

Mm-hm.

Sorren

Which is, to be fair, kind of what they do at the end because they're like, "We're not giving this back."

Morgan

Be gay, do crime, redistribute wealth...

Sorren

And then buy ice cream.

Morgan

Where was the ice cream scene from Six of Crows? I want an ice cream scene in Six of Crows now. Six of Crows 3. Leigh Bardugo.

Sorren

I think they should all get ice cream, that would be fair.

Morgan

No one needs to die.

Sorren

This reminds me of when everyone was begging Rick Riordan to tell them what happened in Blood of Olympus and he was like "They just sit in the mess hall and eat nachos for 500 pages. Is that what you want? Is that what you want to hear?" And everyone was unironically like, "Yes, I do."

Morgan

Let them be happy, be safe. Sorren, who's your favourite character?

Sorren

Oh, it's hard. I think it's Madeline.

Morgan

Mm-hm.

Sorren

I love someone who's repressing all of that anger, as we've established...

Morgan

Mm-hm.

Sorren

Fashion icon, as we've established. That scene where she's doing little things for everyone around the school. And you can see her thoughts of "Don't ask me to do this just because I'm always nice, I hate you. No, I'm not doing that." But then doing it."

Morgan

Yeah.

Sorren

She's the embodiment of the "Will you pass the salt? No," joke. She did also just pleasantly surprise me because I was getting worried. Which is unfair. I don't know, I think I've been reading a couple of young adult books that just weren't very nuanced or good before this, and I was like, "Am I just sick of young adult? Do I just need to stop reading young adults? Have I just had enough?" And then I read this and I was like, "Oh, no, young adult can actually be really good. (Laughing) It just needs to actually be written well, basically." So...

Sorren

(Laughing) Mm. Yeah.

Sorren

I feel like that's a facet of how good she was, so...

Morgan

I always get worried that I'm growing out of YA.

Sorren

Yeah.

Morgan

I've read some really bad books recently. But then, I read Legendborn and I read this and was like, "Oh, YA can be good. It's just not that well written a lot of the time." Teenagers deserve well written books.

Sorren

They do.

Morgan

Please give them well written books.

Sorren

Who was your favourite?

Morgan

It's gotta be Madeline. It's gotta be Madeline!

Sorren

We're such similar people.

Morgan

Yeah, I am also a people pleaser, you know, especially at work recently, I've been like, "Mm, I need to learn how to say no!" I feel that mood on a fundamental level. And just like, all of the scenes of her smiling, but then all of her internal thoughts being like, "I-I'm gonna kill somebody." She's a fashion icon. I love her hair, specifically, I love how floofy it is. I love the round glasses. I think she's just the most fully realised character in this book.

Sorren

Mm.

Morgan

Ella doesn't have the same amount of characterization, even though, or maybe because she is the main character.

Sorren

Yeah.

Morgan

So we're seeing everything through her eyes, but we're not seeing her, herself.

Sorren

Yeah.

Morgan

Which I feel like happens quite a lot with protagonists.

Sorren

I think it can especially happen in graphic novels because you're seeing everything through the eyes, but you don't have the advantage of the prose as filtered through their voice to get to know them. Thought bubbles function very differently, you have very limited space, and they usually deal with your immediate inner monologue. You're not mentally describing the kitchen table you see every day even though how you mentally describe it could reveal a lot about your character. You can't be like: "It was blue. Disgusting colour blue."

Morgan

(Laughs)

Sorren

(Laughing) Because that would be like, a weird thing to put in- In a thought bubble.

Morgan

The curtains were blue. This made me mad. That's the true meaning of it this whole time.

Sorren

Abysmal. I feel like I need to caveat that I don't hate blue. Blue is fine.

Morgan

(Sarcastically) It's fine. It's okay. That's a very neutral statement.

Sorren

No, I like Blue. Gets- gets cancelled for disliking blue.

Morgan
(Laughing)

Sorren
They never use blue in any of the marketing for The Hidden Bookcase, it's because they hate it!

Morgan
Some blues are kind of... They're not given its all, you know?

Sorren
Oh, oooh!

Morgan
That's my hot take.

Sorren
Navy?

Morgan
Navy- no.

Sorren
I feel like navy is controversial. I like navy, I think navy is fine.

Morgan
I like Navy. And I like really like, aggressively electric like, darkish blue.
But then like-

Sorren
This is a podcast about colours now.

Morgan
The sky blue is boring. That's my hot take.

Sorren
Okay. Yeah. Okay, fair enough I-

Morgan
Enjoy sky blue? No, thank you. I won't.

Sorren

(Laughs) I don't remember what we were talking about originally... Oh yeah, Ella! Yeah I do feel like she gets a bit less characterization. I would really love a sequel for this. I think that there's so much more for these characters. I know they're graduating so it'd kind of be tricky.

Morgan

Well it's the whole thing of, once you've got into the relationship people don't know what to do with them.

Sorren

That's true.

Morgan

So if you put them in a new setting, then that can create conflict. Over the summer after graduation trying to figure out what they're going to do with their lives...

Sorren

Are they going to the same college or different colleges...? Is Madeline going, because she didn't really seem to want to?

Morgan

That would be fun to see.

Sorren

This does have a very like, teenagery feel in that they're very ensconced in that world, I don't think you ever see any younger or older characters, which I think is a stylistic choice. I imagine that was done deliberately because I feel like that is sometimes how it feels as a secondary schooler. Because you're so wrapped up in your own problems with like, school and exams, etc. To be fair, I think there might be like, a few panels with teachers and things...

Morgan

But they're never properly focused on. You don't see their faces, it's just their bodies.

Sorren

Yeah. They're very peripheral.

Morgan

I feel like that's the first rule of kids' fiction is "Get rid of the parents."

Sorren

Exactly. Sometimes I feel like it's too unanimously treated as a rule because I think you can tell really interesting stories where parents are involved...

Morgan

Mm. One thing I noticed actually in Finding Home as well was the use of not putting people's faces. When we first meet Ishaan, his face isn't pictured until like Volume Two, it's always obscured in clouds of smoke panels, or half and half. Makes the impact of him showing up way more, "Ouch. I hate this man already. And I haven't even seen his face."

Sorren

It exploits your instinctive fear of the unknown, basically.

Morgan

Yeah, don't know how I'd apply that to Thieves other than... Adults don't get faces!

Sorren

Adults don't get faces. You don't seem Madeline's parents or anything.

Morgan

Mm.

Sorren

And then I guess you see Ella's parents in that email. But that's also different because it's like, through a screen.

Morgan

Yeah, that doesn't count.

Sorren

Like, a panel within a panel, they're very like, abstracted.

Morgan

Yeah.

Sorren

I think in *Thieves*, it serves a dual purpose apart from demonstrating how isolated the teen characters feel, and how dissociated they are from the adults around them, I think it serves the secondary function of... This is a coming of age book in a lot of ways so not depicting any adults faces drives home, how scary that coming of age can be, how you're entering into a world you really don't understand.

I couldn't find who this was translated by... But I just want to say that whoever it was did a really good job because I feel like this feels very teenagery in its cadence, but also not region-locked, because I guess we were both having problems trying to figure out where it was set. I feel like they definitely talk like teenagers, despite the fact that they're not using local slang, or really anything that's going to date it even some Alice Oseman stuff, I'm like, you've got the Tumblr references in there in 10 years is anyone... Or, already everyone who's on Tumblr is like in their 20s.

Morgan

(Laughs) At a minimum. The way that some people use Tumblr in fiction confuses the hell out of me.

Sorren

I think some people just think that it's like every other social media but like, for the weird indie kids and it's like, "No, no one's posting *their* photos." I mean, some people are, but you know what I mean.

Morgan

It's used in *Love Simon* like that.

Sorren

Yes, it's used in such a bizarre way in *Love Simon*.

Morgan

So I just finished reading *One of Us Is Lying* by Karen M. McManus and it's used in the exact same way!

Sorren

Oh.

Morgan

The killer is posting updates on Tumblr being like, "I did it and now they're all getting framed for murder. Hahahahaha." And- You're not posting that on Tumblr, bestie!

Sorren

I've got a counter argument. No, I feel like that's exactly the kind of thing I would see on some weird blog with no followers.

Morgan

Okay, but then everybody at school the next day is like, "Oh my god, did you see the Tumblr post?"

Sorren

Oh no, that's- No. Talking about Tumblr in public is legal.

Morgan

Exactly.

Sorren

I even feel weird doing it on this show.

Morgan

(Laughs)

Sorren

I guess Instagram gets mentioned, but Instagram gets mentioned in the kind of way that people... Use it.

Morgan

Yeah, Instagram makes sense, especially for a book like this.

Sorren

But I just feel like this is going to have a pretty timeless quality. I feel like in 20 years, it will still feel relevant.

Morgan

Mm.

Sorren

Certain teen fiction, you look back on it, and you're like, "Woah... feels like a relic of some kind."

Morgan
(Laughs)

Sorren

I also do like that this isn't like, a coming out narrative. I appreciate that those needs to exist, but once again, it's kind of nice that them being queer isn't like, a problem.

Morgan

They just are, and that's a vibe, and it's not even questioned.

Sorren

No, like, they chat about it. But...

Morgan

And there's no panic of "Oh my god, I like this girl. But like, what if she doesn't like girls? Oh, my God!" which is like, I know that that is a realistic fear. But also, we've had enough.

Sorren
Exactly.

Morgan

Also like, looking at a Madeline... no straight person dresses like that.

Sorren

Precisely, Ella could tell! But even then, I think sometimes portraying it as a fear- Like again, it's a legitimate fear to have. But I think that straight people don't usually worry that people aren't straight when they crush on them. They just crush on them, and then... I would say that the majority of people are gonna react fine, if that person says, "Oh, I'm aro, I'm gay." They'll just be like, "Okay, well, it's not going to work and move on." But they're not going to feel guilty for liking them in the first place, whereas gay people do quite a lot of the time. And yeah, if Madeline had turned around, and been like I like boys, I feel like Ella would have just been like, "Okay," and moved on to the next thing to be honest.

Morgan

(Laughs)

Sorren

But I don't think she would have felt bad about it, which is nice. Because like, there is literally nothing to feel bad about. You cannot control who you like, and if they don't like you back then that's fine, you need to back off, obviously, because you can't change someone's feelings, but you didn't do anything wrong by liking them. And by asking them if they're interested. On a totally unrelated note, but coming back to the use of colour in this comic, Madelin's former bully having the orange eyes.

Morgan

Yes.

Sorren

Which is also usually connected to her stress. We've had two comics that use orange as like, a negative association colour for some reason.

Morgan

I'm glad that we're moving on from typical red, but also what did orange ever do?

Sorren

What did orange ever do? I like orange. I think it works very well here though.

Morgan

Yeah, it's very creepy.

Sorren

Yeah, maybe it's just because it's such an unnatural colour. Whereas if you had red you might just be like, "Is he stoned? Was he crying?" Red has other implications that are confusing, potentially.

Morgan

Whereas orange is just like "Oh, he's evil. I understand."

Sorren

The colour of evil.

Morgan

Are you saying oranges are evil?

Sorren

Yes, I'm getting cancelled twice on this episode.

Morgan

Wow.

Sorren

Oranges are evil. Blue is a terrible colour. Oh, one thing that I do like, kind of circling back, the water being used for like, panic for Ella, and that scene where they're like talking over their feelings and they're on the bed and then the bed floating overtop of the water. The panic is still there, but they're like, on the little raft together... A very good like, extended metaphor, in a visual sense. Love it when comics do that.

Morgan

There's just so much you can do in a graphic novel that you can't do in a book.

Sorren

Are you gonna become a graphic novelist now Morgan-?

Morgan

No, I can't draw.

Sorren

You can draw!

Morgan

I promise you I cannot draw.

Sorren

I've seen you draw. Don't lie. Don't lie on the podcast, everyone's gonna hear you.

Morgan

(Laughs)

Sorren

Although, speaking of things you can do in a graphic novel that you can't do in a book... The exam scene being interspersed with the party scene at the end. That's very cute. You theoretically could do that in a book, but I think it would feel a bit clunky and forced.

Morgan

Mm. No, it definitely works well here.

Sorren

In a film or a TV show, it would also work... But because of the different colour palettes, it's really nice because it does that thing of having very different moods.

Morgan

Yeah, I think being able to see both at once juxtaposed is very effective... paralleling Leslie and Madeline and Ella, all doing it at the same time. I just love them.

Sorren

They're so cute as a little trio, and I guess Leslie's boyfriend can come too. I've forgotten his name.

Morgan

(Laughs)

Sorren

And I keep just calling him Leslie's boyfriend. I feel like he wouldn't mind...

Morgan

He drinks his respect women juice.

Sorren

He really does. If there had to be one guy in this comic then I'm glad that it was him. But yeah, that ending is very sweet. You could also make the argument that you're undermining the tension, because clearly they're at the party, and they're all fine. So Madeline must have passed. But I feel like it's that the emotional tension has resolved because it was really more about the relationships involved.

Morgan

Yeah.

Sorren

So I feel like it's not necessary to string the reader along. But I feel like it's not even really a conflict. It's just an example of how Madeline's circumstances have changed somewhat because she now has a group of friends who she can rely on.

Morgan

Support system!

Sorren

Yeah, she has a support system: as the reader you're not doubting that. Makes sense to not try to like, fake your reader out here and be like, "Wow, maybe she won't pass!" Like, you know, she's going to pass when she gets help from her friends. It's just nice to see them working together. It can just be fluff at that point. We've done the hard part.

Morgan

Mm-hm.

Sorren

Morgan, how do you feel about Thieves? What was your rating?

Morgan

My rating was 4.5. I've decided this year that I'm going to start giving half points. Even though GoodReads won't let me. I really, really loved it. It was so cute. I read it in a couple of hours just sitting on my bed. I wanted a little bit more to like push it up to a five stars, but like this is still a very, very good review. I'm going to be more sparing with my five stars this year. After discovering I rated 86 books five stars last year.

Sorren

86?

Morgan

Or however many it was. But yeah, no, 4.5 really, really cute. Really, really fun. Will be recommending it. Will read it again.

Sorren

In a reversal of the common fortunes, this was a five from me. I just really liked it. I think it was just because I hadn't read good YA in a really long time, and this reminded me of everything that good YA can be. Maybe it was a little bit circumstantial... It'd been a very long time as well since I started reading something and then just didn't go to sleep because I just wanted to finish reading it. Coincidentally that also happened with the last volume Finding Home! I just thought it was really charming and I love the style. I do empathise in terms of like, wanting more, but I think for what it is and the page time that it had. I think it really excels in that space.

Morgan

If people liked Thieves, do you have any recommendations?

Sorren

My recommendations are... If you haven't read Heartstopper. What are you doing? That seems obvious.

Morgan

Mm.

Sorren

Tillie Walden as well. Mildly similar art style, usually sapphic focus, usually science fictiony elements as well, which is fun. So would definitely recommend. Third recommendation, The Girl from the Sea by Molly Knox Ostertag, which is a sapphic romantic comic about a selkie, who falls in love with a girl. And it has a little bit of environmentalism in it. It's also very slice of life, slightly higher stakes, because there's some eco fantasy elements, but it had a very similar feel. It also has very charming art style, that's in full colour, and it's very pretty. And then I'm going to be cheeky and recommend something that's not a book but is a webcomic. But I think it will eventually be a book because it's really good. Which is Encore! (exclamation mark) by Miles T Burkes, which is another slice of life, young adults. This one's gay, as in, two boys. One of them is trans, and a lot of their extended friendship group are also trans, which is really nice to see that representation. This one does have a little bit more of ruminating on queerness and coming out. So if you're sick of that you might want to steer clear from it, but it's just very fun, and it has a lot of heart and the art style is really adorable, and I just think it deserves more attention than it gets. Morgan.

Morgan

(Laughs)

Sorren

I've just thrown like, four recommendations out, do you have any recommendations?

Morgan

(Laughs) Um, I think I'm just gonna second the Alice Oseman recommendation and the Tillie Walden recommendation, because I don't read very much contemporary. But I have read all the Alice Oseman, and I have enjoyed them and they have the same kind of vibe.

Sorren

And even if you're listening to this, and you're more of a graphic novels person, I still think that Alice Oseman's novel-novels are really good. And I don't think they're like, high entry barrier?

Morgan

Mm.

Sorren

I think even if you're not a big reader, they're not mired in complicated language or anything. They're just simple but incredibly well formed in their simplicity. So, makes a lot of sense that their name was on the back of this book.

Morgan

Do you want to know the three authors on the back of this book?

Sorren

Who are the three authors on the back of this book?

Morgan

Alice Oseman.

Sorren

Mm-hm.

Morgan

Tillie Walden

Sorren

Tillie Walden- Oh, I didn't even know that Tillie was on the back.

Morgan

(Laughing) And Molly Knox Ostertag.

Sorren

(Laughing) Oh, really? I didn't know that either. Well, look at me, I'm not recommending you anything useful.

Morgan

(Laughing) You're simply just very good at guessing the vibes.

Sorren

Apparently.

Morgan

I'm getting more into graphic novels this year, because one of my coworkers keeps ordering in really good graphic novels. And I'm like, "I'll get that." And he's like, "Guess who ordered that in? It was me." And I'm like, "Well, stop it, because I have too many at home."

Sorren

(Laughs)

Morgan

Far too many.

Sorren

It's a guaranteed sale every time he's not going to stop it.

Morgan

They've all figured out I'm an easy mark.

Sorren

Yep.

Morgan

They see me in and they're like, "Morgan, do you know what you should buy today?" And I'm like, "Fine."

Sorren

It's a good thing you read so fast, because it's not like a completely untenable situation, but it's close.

Morgan

Mm-hm.... I'm gonna have to slow down this year Sorren, I've got a dissertation to write.

Sorren

That's why you're reading more graphic novels.

Morgan

Mm-hm.

Sorren

Because they're quicker...

Morgan

Mm-hm. Have I read 10 books this month? Yes.

Sorren

Morgan, how have you read-?! It's- For those who are like, "Oh, okay, but this came out in late February." It's the fifth of January as we're recording this.

Morgan

(Laughing)

Sorren

That's two per day.

Morgan

I'm getting ahead of myself now. So when I fall later... I've done nothing but read for like, the last three days.

Sorren

Okay. I'm glad, please relax.

Morgan

No, never.

Sorren

No, I meant... by reading.

Morgan

Oh, yeah, okay. I'll think about it.

Sorren

Continuing the sapphic theme. We're doing sequels in March and the first sequel that we're reading is A Restless Truth by Freya Marske. We did A Marvellous Light last year, and we loved it. So, of course, we had to do A Restless Truth.

Morgan

It's so good, guys. It's so good.

Sorren

It's so good. We may have already read it. That will be out on the 6th of March.

Morgan

Until then you always come through the bookcase.

Sorren

Don't forget to scritch the cat on your way out.

Thank you for listening to The Hidden Bookcase, a production of Planar Prod. On this episode, you heard Morgan Greensmith and Sorren Briarwood discussing Thieves by Lucy Bryon. You can find out more about thieves at luchie.fr and you can follow Bryon @heyluchie on Twitter. You can find The Hidden Bookcase on Twitter @HiddenBookcase and on Instagram, Facebook, Tumblr and TikTok @HiddenBookcasePodcast. Find out more about Planar Prod at planarprod.com.

Know what we should read next or want to chat to us about what you thought of this episode's read? You can reach us thehiddenbookcase@gmail.com, or send us a DM on social media. We'd love to hear from you.

If you're enjoying The Hidden Bookcase please consider leaving us a rating or review. Or you can always tell a friend how to find us. Your whispers are the best way for book worms to discover our show.

For March we're reading sequels on The Hidden Bookcase. On our next episode, which will be out on Monday the 6th of March we'll be discussing *A Restless Truth* by Freya Marske, the second book in The Last Binding trilogy. We hope to see you then, and in the meantime, you're always welcome through the bookcase.