

Episode Title: Truth in Fiction

Guest: Jane Rosen

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What if you found out your favorite fiction author was actually pulling all those incredible stories from her real life? Well, on the next Grown Ass Woman's Guide, you'll meet author Jane Rosen, who is doing just that. We talk about her latest book, the very unexpected way she became an author, and the crazy twists and turns that only real life can provide. Plus, she has tips for those of you who are thinking about writing a book. Check it out. How often do you read for pleasure? Daily? Occasionally? Or are you like me, you enjoy it so much, but it rarely moves to the top of the priority list? Today's episode may change that.

For me, I often consume nonfiction as an audio book. I don't know what it is, but I'm just able to receive the information better. If I'm cleaning or driving or doing some other activity, it's kind of like podcasts. And I get a new credit each month with my audible subscription. In fact, let's hold up for a second. If you are listening right now, and you would love to dive into a great audiobook, like the one written by my guest today, or any other title, I would love to send you one of my audible credits for free. But this is what I need you to do. Head to your favorite podcast app and leave an honest rating and review. Take a screenshot of the review. Email me at hello@grownasswoman.guide. And I will send the first five people to do that the audiobook of your choice. It's that easy. All right. So, where was I?

When it comes to fiction, there's nothing like curling up with a good book. I'm able to shut off my very active brain, push everything else aside for a little while and enjoy a great story. Recently I did that for an entire weekend, it's a true story, with the latest book from today's guest. *On Fire Island* by Jane Rosen was the perfect end of summer weekend read for me. What I love about Jane's writing is that it comes from her own experience. As a wife, mom, sister, daughter, and friend, her stories, while fiction, are inspired by her own life, sometimes to the displeasure of others. You'll have to hear that story. And Jane shares what I think is a major twist her own career took when she decided to put pen to paper for her first of five novels. Yes. We talk about her book, which you can find linked in the show notes, but mostly we talk about the themes in the

book and how we, as grown-ass women, can learn and grow by having the courage to open ourselves up to new ideas. Oh, and if writing a book has been on your bucket list, definitely stay to the end. Jane gives some great no-nonsense advice on how to get started. Let's dive in. Jane, welcome to the Grown Ass Woman's Guide.

[00:02:53] **Jane:** Thank you for having me.

[00:02:55] **Jackie:** I loved your book. Fiction for me is me-time. I will listen to nonfiction on Audible or, recently rediscovered the library, what a concept, but fiction for me is like, open that book, lie in my bed or on a hammock or whatever and just enjoy the journey. So thank you for giving me that 'cause it was really, really good and I really loved it.

[00:03:22] **Jane:** Thank you so much Jackie. I loved writing it. It's my favorite of all my novels.

[00:03:29] **Jackie:** It is?

[00:03:30] **Jane:** Yeah, and I have loved sharing it with the world this summer. It's been great, great experience.

[00:03:35] **Jackie:** , I always know it's a good book when at the end of it I'm, I'm a little sad, like I'm a little sad that I'm done hanging out with these characters I've become fond of. That's when I know it was, I really liked it.

[00:03:48] **Jane:** It's a great feeling like I have to read so many books for research, and then I have to read a lot of books when people ask me to blurb their books. So when I get to choose a title of my own that I just sit down and read for no other reason, then pleasure, it's the best feeling.

[00:04:06] **Jackie:** It's awesome. So your book's called *On Fire Island*. I will tell you right now, every time I think of Fire Island, like I always think of these really hot gay guys, going to their weekend on Fire Island. I never thought of it as this place that families go. And, and, and of course it's like, you know, but When was your first experience there? Because I know you live part of the year there. And then when did you think I have to write about this place?

[00:04:31] **Jane:** Okay, so there are 17 different communities on Fire Island and there's only two gay communities. And while they are amazing and deserve every bit of accolades that they get, there's all these other communities that are completely different. The reason everything is so different is 'cause there are no

cars. So you kind of just interact. With the town on your left or the town on your right where you could ride your bicycle or walk there. Now I go to the gay communities or to Fair Harbor, which is in the other direction, a fun town to visit, or kismet, whatever it is, or water taxi. But it's not like an everyday thing. It would be an event, you know, let's all go down to The Pines, or let's go to gay Bingo, which is in my book.

[00:05:18] **Jackie:** Mm-hmm.

[00:05:18] **Jane:** So we don't all melt that much. It's a storybook thing. Those two towns, those two gay...

[00:05:25] **Jackie:** Well, it's like Cape Cod in Provincetown, right? It's like that's only a small part of it,

[00:05:30] **Jane:** Right. It's a small part of it and it's such a wonderful place for to visit and feel so at home. So it's a great place. But, my first visit on Fire Island was in a share house. In Ocean Beach, which is another big town, and I had a share house there for a couple of summers, left, and then my roommate had a share house and I went with her and my husband-to-be opened the front door of the share house. And I met him. We got, he got arrested for drinking a Snapple in town the next day on. You weren't allowed to drink anything. Anything in a bottle in the town of Ocean Beach, it was called The Land of No, Warren got arrested drinking the Snapple. I followed him into the police station and I said to the officer, my boyfriend just got off the boat and I was just explaining the rules to him when you arrested him, I think you should let him go. I mean, it wasn't like arrest, arrest, it was like a \$50 fine, but still, and the man let him go, the police officer let him go, and that was it. Warren was like, wow, you just got me outta trouble in two seconds.

[00:06:35] **Jackie:** Marry me.

[00:06:36] **Jane:** I think like two and a half weeks later we were talking marriage.

[00:06:41] **Jackie:** Really? But wait, but hold on one second. Go back to this whole law. So was it because it was glass?

[00:06:47] **Jane:** I'm not, I mean, this was a while ago and I think it was because of the glass and 'cause of also drunken behavior. Maybe you could be holding a Snapple bottle or maybe really filled with rum or whatever.

[00:06:57] **Jackie:** Wow.

[00:06:58] **Jane:** It was a hole to-do. You weren't allowed to eat or drink anything on the streets.

[00:07:03] **Jackie:** Wow.

I've got to interrupt here for a second, because this is fascinating. I did a little search and lo and behold today, in 2023, these rules are still in effect. According to villageofoceanbeach.org, on the beach, you may only drink water out of a plastic bottle. You may consume non-alcoholic beverages in the commercial business district, but they must be in plastic or paper container, no glass or cans and get this: eating is allowed only in the commercial business district. There is no eating permitted on the beach, overpasses leading to the beach, or in the residential area. I don't know why I had to look this up and share it, but I did. Have you ever heard of rules like this? Seriously? Okay. Okay. Back to Jane.

[00:07:47] **Jane:** The police officer who arrested us came to our ten year anniversary party with two Snapple bottles with handcuffs around them. It was the cutest thing.

[00:08:00] **Jackie:** Nooo! I feel like that story right there, it probably sums up Fire Island for you right there. You know that the man who arrests him or finds him 10 years later is like at the anniversary party.

[00:08:12] **Jane:** Yes, yes. It's a very small town, as you could see from the book. All the towns, I think, are very small towns on Fire Island, and we just never left. And a lot of people that meet out there romantically buy houses out there and stay because it's not the easiest place to be. You have to, you drive to the ferry, which isn't terrible. It's about an hour from the city on a good day, and then you schlep all your things. There's no cars. You have a little wagon tied up by the ferry and you load everything on and you go to your house and you have to buy most things in the little, one little market and one little liquor store. And it's not the easiest place to get stuff, so you gotta really be committed. And I think when you meet there and you have that romantic vision of it, it gives you a good reason to stay. The other reason to stay is really for the kids, because the freedom, the dichotomy between New York City and Fire Island is unbelievable. By the time, you read in the book, by the time they're like six years old, they're signing their name at the market, buying a sandwich, sitting with their friends, eating it, you don't see those kids for hours at a time.

[00:09:23] **Jackie:** Yeah, it's like going back to the Gen X childhood, right?

[00:09:27] **Jane:** Yes,

[00:09:28] **Jackie:** Like, what we had that we couldn't give our kids necessarily in certain areas, it's like you actually had the opportunity to give that to your daughter.

[00:09:35] **Jane:** Which is quite unbelievable. Yes, exactly. Home when the lights, when the sun goes down kind of thing.

[00:09:42] **Jackie:** Right. Ugh, I love that. One of the things that really stuck with me, so it's not a spoiler, but your main character is 37 years old when she passes away of cancer. That's the concept here, but it really struck me at this point of my life, and I think a lot of women can relate to it. We don't have to die to kind of get a bird's eye view of where we've been and what impact we've made. Is there a message to women through this character, what were your thoughts when you created this character whose past, but she's seeing the life that she left behind, where did that come from?

[00:10:22] **Jane:** Well, my sister passed away when she was 39.

[00:10:24] **Jackie:** Hmm, I'm sorry.

[00:10:26] **Jane:** She was pretty strong about it, but she had two children that she was leaving behind, so I purposely did not give Julia children. I think that would've made it too difficult in many ways. I wanted to show this experience in life and I wanted to show a map of how to get through it without it being a nonfiction, self-help kind of book. Because I've experienced so much death in my life and I've gotten through it with resilience and with humor. I just wanted to display that inside this wonderful community that I love, the supportive community of people.

[00:11:06] **Jackie:** Yeah. And is there any sort of messaging in there like, or am I reading into it? Is there any sort of messaging in there with Julia as far as how you live today and, and how you look back on that life?

[00:11:20] **Jane:** I think the message really is that love doesn't die and that even if you lose someone, you can keep that love with them and that love for them for the rest of your life.

[00:11:28] **Jackie:** Yeah.

[00:11:29] **Jane:** And I think that's my main message. If someone dies, it doesn't mean they're not still with you. It doesn't mean you can't talk to them. It doesn't mean you can't love them. It doesn't mean that your relationship is over.

[00:11:45] **Jackie:** Yeah. Being able to watch the people she left behind go through that, the depths of grief, but there are hints of hope. How does your personal life experience show up in this book, but in all of the books that you've written?

[00:12:02] **Jane:** Well, this book, it's really quite blurred, meaning that the sense of place in the book is told from my opinion, it's my fire island that I'm showing you. So this summer, some people would say things to me like, you didn't talk about the tennis as much as you talked about the softball, or whatever it was. And I would say, that's because this is my version. This is my fire island. So yes, it's all over the book. The people in the book our original thoughts, really, they're not, a few of them are strongly based on people, but most of them are just an amalgamation of everybody, you know? Because it's a kooky place filled with kooky people. It certainly comes out in the pages of the book. I think all my books have some of myself in them.

[00:12:51] **Jackie:** Mm-hmm.

[00:12:52] **Jane:** Like my last book of *Shoe Story*, my dad passed away when I was 11 and he was in World War II. Okay. In the Coast Guard, and he was in the invasions of Sicily, Salerno, and Normandy. But of course I was 11 when he died. It's not like when people don't talk about the war anyway, but he certainly wasn't talking about it to me. But I explored his entire trip in a shoe story, like through one of my characters, like I got letters that he wrote home to his mom, like the, what are they called? Not letters. Um, you know, when they send them...

[00:13:26] **Jackie:** Oh yeah. Tele- Telegraph or Telegram?

[00:13:29] **Jane:** Yeah, that. Yeah. Sorry. Yes. I traced his ship number and where he went, and it was really an incredible journey that I got to experience through the eyes of a 17 year old man, which is when my father signed up for the Coast Guard. It was really amazing.

[00:13:49] **Jackie:** Wow. What a gift.

[00:13:50] **Jane:** Yes, it was a gift.

[00:13:51] **Jackie:** It sounds like a love letter to your dad.

[00:13:54] **Jane:** It was really interesting.

[00:13:56] **Jackie:** Yeah.

[00:13:56] **Jane:** Really was. Even though the book's called a Shoe Story, it has that whole thing in it.

[00:14:00] **Jackie:** Well, sometimes we gotta sell. We gotta sell the book, you know,

[00:14:04] **Jane:** My first novel, *Nine Women One Dress* has an entire chapter with. All family names of mine, like old family names like two generations ago, so that was fun too. There are definitely ways you explore your own life when you're writing a novel, even though it's fiction.

[00:14:24] **Jackie:** Yeah. Have you ever ticked anybody off with portrayals or names or situations?

[00:14:32] **Jane:** I have heard that I ticked someone off. I'd rather not say it , but yes, I have heard that I ticked someone off. And the funny thing is the person was right, like someone said, this reminds me of my husband to a friend of mine, and I was like, Hmm, it is. Very much so. Yeah. I mean, and then sometimes I just get my own little sweet revenge and no one even knows about it except for me.

[00:14:58] **Jackie:** Right? It's hilarious.

[00:15:02] **Jane:** Yeah. it is kind of funny, but mostly it's all made up.

[00:15:05] **Jackie:** Yeah.

[00:15:06] **Jane:** Don't cross me. Don't cross me, Jackie.

[00:15:08] **Jackie:** I know. Don't get in Jane's way, or you'll be in the next book.

[00:15:12] **Jackie:** Did you release five books in ten years?

[00:15:15] **Jane:** Could you believe it? It's not ten, I think it was 2016. I wrote, published my first novel, and I have my fifth novel coming out in the spring.

[00:15:28] **Jackie:** Wow. Oh, so, wow. Not even like eight years.

[00:15:32] **Jane:** Yeah.

[00:15:32] **Jackie:** And through like so much I'm sure has happened in your own life through those eight years. Like, how do you approach, so, you know, the woman listening is, mostly women, um, is a grown ass woman probably over 40, like, has been through some things. Like, how do you approach writing your books differently than when you first started writing?

[00:15:52] **Jane:** I think that when I first started writing, I was a screenwriter before this. I think when I first started writing, it felt more like a hobby. And while I love writing, I really do, I really enjoy it, it now feels more like a career, most days I get up and write for a number of hours just as if you were going into an office and doing the job, so I think I approached that differently. I also, I changed, I pivoted at like 50 years old from screenwriting to novel writing. So that was a big deal, it was a great next chapter for me. I told you before we started recording that one of my children had been ill, and that's how I started writing my first book because my daughter had something called POTS at the time, which caused her to faint.

[00:16:48] **Jackie:** Hmm.

[00:16:48] **Jane:** And she was at the high school performing arts and she would start to realize, I'm going to faint, you know? And she'd make her way to the nurse's office and sit down and call me and I would come pick her up. But that stressed her out. She's a really good girl and she hated the thought that I was of making this panic phone call on me running across town in downtown, 'cause it was kind of far from my apartment and picking her up. So we decided that I would start writing the novel. I always wanted to write. In the library across the street from her school.

[00:17:18] **Jackie:** Oh.

[00:17:19] **Jane:** Yep. So, you know, talk about making lemonade from lemons or whatever, you know, I sat across the street from her school and wrote and wrote and wrote. And when she needed me, I crossed the street and got her. And it was kind of unbelievable. And I wrote most of the books sitting in that library.

[00:17:39] **Jackie:** Wow.

[00:17:39] **Jane:** Yes. Me and a host of homeless people.

[00:17:43] **Jackie:** That's amazing. Was writing novels kind of part of the plan anyway or did it shift because you were at that library? Like, which came first?

[00:17:52] **Jane:** I was a screenwriter, as I said, and I was on a trip and I was at the airport and I met someone who said, I have a great story for you. And usually I'm, I'm really wary of that 'cause, whatever.

[00:18:07] **Jackie:** Because people never have a great story for you?

[00:18:09] **Jane:** or you feel like you're stealing this. I don't know, but she's, she told me the story and the story was of a woman who worked at Bloomingdale's and got a dress that was returned, covered in formaldehyde. That was the story she told me and I was like, wow, this is a book. I'm gonna trace that dress, which is like the end, right? The dress was covered in Meldy, back to the beginning. And that's why I wrote *Nine Women One Dress*.

[00:18:36] **Jackie:** Oh.

[00:18:36] **Jane:** reason I wrote it as a book had nothing to do with the library. It had to do with all the screenplays that I had written in my life that were never made into movies. I sold them, but they weren't made. And I was tired of just sharing my story with my family and, and a studio that bought it or whatever, you know, a producer or anything like that, but not with people. So I decided I would write *Nine Women One Dress* when I got the time to write it as a book and then it would probably get made into a movie, which is funny 'cause it was optioned very quickly. But yeah, so I had it in my head that I was gonna attempt to write a novel instead of a screenplay.

[00:19:13] **Jackie:** Wow.

[00:19:14] **Jackie:** And isn't that wild that you still, it optioned into a film like a screenplay. So you're still writing the screenplay, sort of, um, but also getting it in front of all of those people that you weren't reaching, which is amazing.

[00:19:28] **Jane:** It's a treat of a book, I must say. If I must say so myself.

[00:19:30] **Jackie:** Yes. Well, I'm gonna go back and read all of them now. I'm in.

If you've heard this podcast before today, you know, I am so passionate about having honest, open conversations with other women over 40. I love how we speak the same language of experience and grow Nasser. But I've been noticing

something lately that I want to explore. And that is intergenerational relationships and mentorship.

[00:19:55] **Jackie:** One of the things that keeps popping into my life lately is the benefits of having intergenerational friendships. You know, having friendships with women who are older. And also the one thing I haven't valued enough is having friendships with those who are much younger, right? Really taking their perspective and their life story into play and and just, you know, building a relationship. And so, in the book, you have this three generation friendship happening with these men, which is so enjoyable and so refreshing. When did you start to think about intergenerational friendship and are your thoughts, especially now that you've put it on paper?

[00:20:38] **Jane:** So Fire Island is a real generator of intergenerational friendships because you are always with the same people, like you're sitting next to them at the ball game. You are on the ferry, riding the ferry. You're in the market with them. You see people and become friends with people of all different ages all the time. During Covid, which was really when I already had this written, but for the most part, whatever, during Covid, we started playing baseball. My husband and I stayed out in Fire Island for six months. We've always played baseball, but we started playing like four days a week with kids and moms and dads, anyone who was out there. And we really became friends with these kids. Like at this point, those Covid kids that I played ball with, they are my friends just as much as their parents are. I'll sit and chat with them. I learned so much from them. Just as much as you could learn from an older person, you could learn from a younger person. My kids are my friends. The things they teach me now in this world, this woke world we're living in, nothing could be more important than being friends with a 16 year old, if you wanna keep up with what's going on, you know, and not say the wrong thing, especially as a writer.

[00:21:56] **Jackie:** Oh yeah. That's gotta be important. Yeah, because I mean, the language has changed. Everything has changed and I have a lot of respect for the fact that you're listening, especially as a writer, because you have to, if you're going to be successful, you should probably listen to younger generations and know what they think and feel and all that good stuff. If we currently aren't on Fire Island and many of us don't necessarily have that lifestyle where there is that mixture of all these different generations, do you have any tips for how someone can continue to learn from a younger generation?

[00:22:29] **Jane:** Yeah, I do. I think in both directions. You could do something very interesting. You could volunteer. In New York City there's an organization

called Dorot where, and I'm sure there's similar organizations everywhere, where you could visit an elderly person. And I started doing that with my kids years ago and ended up matched up with someone who I met with like once a week for a couple of years. So you could do that and it's you, you, would get, you get more out of it than they do almost 'cause it's just really interesting and fulfilling and wonderful. And then in the other direction, you could actually do the same thing. You could volunteer anywhere, a high school, anything that you wanted to do. But also, community centers, you know? The Y, the JCC, whatever it is. And if you have kids, well there you go. You're friend, they're friends and, and then, you know. Cousins, nieces, so many people.

[00:23:27] **Jackie:** Yeah.

[00:23:28] **Jane:** I mean, you, you know, my niece today, I sent her a meme on Instagram of some, you know, of two reptiles. But it's sounds silly, but it's, it's a connection, you know, and I made a joke and she wrote back.

[00:23:43] **Jackie:** Yeah, it's their language.

[00:23:44] **Jane:** I started working for my nephew a couple of years ago, just for a short time, and I couldn't get over the language in his company. I had no, I mean between low hanging fruit and is that in your wheelhouse and all of these things. I was like, why aren't they speaking English? I had to Google half the things they said.

[00:24:05] **Jackie:** But that's amazing 'cause you're doing it though. You're not rejecting it, you're learning from it. You're googling,

[00:24:10] **Jane:** I didn't wanna feel like an old lady, so I wasn't gonna say, what are they talking about? I Googled it.

[00:24:15] **Jackie:** Yeah, that's wild. My middle son is in marching band and I volunteer as the media and publicity person, and so I do all their social media and I make reels and all that, and just being around those kids, you know, it's so cool. Like, I feel like teenagers get such a bad rap, right? They get this like, oh, they're moody and they're this, and they're that. And like, they're probably all the things that people say and they have so much insight and their own experiences. And it's just, it's fascinating to be around them. I really love it. And also I go to them and I go, is this lame? You know, and and they'll tell me.

[00:24:51] **Jane:** And there's so many things, like I said before, that you can't say anymore. Like, remember that George Carlin joke? The seven words you

can't say on television. It's 7,000 words now. He would have to have like a six hour special to save all the words.

[00:25:03] **Jackie:** Right. Although I would listen to George Carlin for six hours. Hehehe! He was so funny. But yeah, you're right. And I think, not rejecting that and just being open-minded to that is, is really important. So, When I think of mentorship, I often think of myself as like being the mentor, and I never think of like, there are also women who have done incredible things who are in their seventies and eighties, who, they have a lot to say and a lot to share.

[00:25:31] **Jane:** Yes, and everyone wants the same thing, right? Everyone wants love and friendship and a good meal. I mean, everyone wants the same thing. They, you know, they wanna laugh, they wanna cry, they want whatever it is. Age really doesn't, it's a social construct, right? It doesn't really make a difference.

To connect with Jane, follow her on Instagram or visit janelrosen.com. And if you're feeling the itch to write your own book or start a creative project, Jane has some tips to get you started at any age.

[00:26:02] **Jackie:** I hear often from women, like, I have this book in me. I have this book in me. What advice would you give yourself at this stage of your life if you were going to now write your first book?

[00:26:13] **Jane:** I think I would take a class. And let me tell you why. Even if I knew how to write a book, because taking a ten week class on fiction writing in a group workshop kind of situation, you are gonna do the work, you're gonna have deadlines, you can do the work, and, and you probably will not, obviously you're not gonna end up with a finished novel, but you will have started your novel and you would get past the point where you could say, oh, I could see myself finishing this. Like, there's a point when you're writing and you're writing and it's the beginning and you're like, oh my goodness. Look, there's so many blank pages ahead of me. But there's a point that you pass where you say, I got this. I'm halfway through. So if you take a class, just to spearhead it, it's a great way to start anything. I think it's a great way to start any new thing that you wanna try.

[00:27:08] **Jackie:** Hmm. And it provides accountability built in.

[00:27:11] **Jane:** Yes.

[00:27:12] **Jackie:** Yeah.

[00:27:12] **Jane:** You have to have a certain amount of pages for next week.

[00:27:15] **Jackie:** Right. Do you have any, um, obviously they'd be virtual or whatever, but do you have any that you'd recommend?

[00:27:21] **Jane:** Sure. You could go on Zibby Books.

[00:27:24] **Jackie:** Mm-hmm.

[00:27:25] **Jane:** She has a lot of great classes and you could go on the Gotham Writers Workshop. Those are both online.

[00:27:31] **Jackie:** Okay.

[00:27:32] **Jane:** And I do think if you can get yourself to a class in a local class in your neighborhood, 'cause I don't really think they have to be so exceptional. You're not, a screenwriting class. I think you, you need more details on how to write a screenplay, but fiction just seems, just, not easier, but not needing to be taught as much. Do you know what I mean by that?

[00:27:53] **Jackie:** Yeah. Hmm. Not as technical.

[00:27:55] **Jane:** Yeah. Yeah, exactly. So yeah, if you could go in person, what a great thing to get yourself out once a week to do. But if you can't, the Zoom is fantastic.

[00:28:04] **Jackie:** Yeah.

[00:28:04] **Jane:** So Zibby's and Gotham Writers.

Thanks so much for listening. Be sure to come back next week for another new episode, we are about to declutter your life, my friend! I would love to hear from you. Please leave a rating and review wherever you listen to podcasts and let's connect on social. You can find me at grownasswoman.guide. And please tell a friend about the show. Until next time you are a Grown-Ass Woman. Act accordingly.