

Transcript of Book Club Girl Podcast, Season 2

Episode 1: Lucy Foley on *The Paris Apartment*

Tavia:

Welcome to the Book Club Girl Podcast, where we chat about great books with awesome authors and you, our listeners ask the questions. I'm Tavia Kowalchuk, and I am so happy to be back for the second season of the show. And I am absolutely delighted to introduce my friend and colleague Bianca Flores, my new co-host. Welcome, Bianca.

Bianca:

Thank you so much, Tavia. Hello everyone. I'm so happy to be the new co-host with Tavia. I am originally from Honolulu, but now I live in San Francisco and you'll find me either listening to a bookish podcast or reading a novel while I am at the park on a sunny day.

Tavia:

I'm so excited to share this podcast with you, Bianca. But before we get into today's episode, I have to ask you, this is the question we asked all of our guests last season, and now I'm asking you, what is your literary white whale?

Bianca:

I am so honored to be asked this question and thank you, Tavia! I would say that my white whale is *100 Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, which is so embarrassing because I have a copy. My mom loves the book and I really identify with my Hispanic roots. And I'm just like, I can't believe I haven't read this book

Tavia:

On today's show we'll discuss the instant number one *New York Times* bestseller *The Paris Apartment*, where everyone's a neighbor, everyone's a suspect and everyone knows something they're not telling. And later in the show we will be joined by this super successful mega blockbuster author, Lucy Foley, British author of the number one *New York Times* bestseller and Reese Witherspoon Book Club pick *The Guest List*, also author of *The Hunting Party*. And now the number one *New York Times* bestseller *The Paris Apartment*.

Bianca:

All right. So before we dive into this week's episode, we wanted to say thanks to Moyne55 for her review. The show that came in over the break Moyne55, writes, "This has been a delightful year of hearing from all of the authors and getting some great book ideas. As far as your white whales. I hope you both overcome your version as both *The Nightingale* and *The Gentleman in Moscow* are great reads."

Tavia:

Oh my gosh. That's so funny. Yes. I must overcome my aversion. So funny. I actually have *The Nightingale* is like on one of these shelves behind me. So, uh, where I'm sitting right now. So maybe, maybe it will jump off at me and land in my lap tonight,

Bianca:

We can have a little, a book club where you talk about *The Nightingale* and I talk about *100 Years of Solitude*.

Tavia:

Totally. And we can talk about the trauma, getting over the trauma. Thank you so much, Moyne55 for your awesome review. We love it. We love it. We love hearing from our listeners. And so remember if you like our show, please rate

and review the Book Club Girl Podcast, especially on iTunes. We appreciate every single review and chances are, if you leave one, we will read it on the show.

Bianca:

And now we present to you, *The Paris Apartment* abridged,

Tavia:

Having a brother who lives in Paris has its perks or does it. But when Jess finally arrives at Ben's fancy Parisian apartment, he isn't there. He didn't leave to run an errand or to go grab dinner with a friend Ben has gone missing and as Jess starts to look for clues as to where he could be. She can't help but notice that his neighbors are all acting suspicious and none of them seem to have ever really liked Ben at all. Ben's apartment building plays a character all on its own with its creaky floorboard, secret passages and chilling atmosphere, its residents each seem to have a secret. There's a humble concierge. There's Antoine, an angry threatening alcoholic who abuses his wife. There's Mimi, who's a young art student on the verge and Sophie, an aging trophy wife with a yippy lap dog, not to mention Nick, an unsuccessful angel investor who's moved back from San Francisco and he's also Ben's college buddy. Nick helped Ben get the apartment in the building, but now seems completely unconcerned where he may be. Told in super short chapters in alternating viewpoints of Jess, the concierge, Nick, Sophie, and Mimi. This locked room thriller will keep you turning the pages until Lucy Foley answers Jess's desperate question: Where is Ben and why did he go missing?

Tavia:

Bianca? I think I know what you're gonna say, but what do you think of this book?

Bianca:

Tavia? I loved this book so much. It is dark. It's eerie. It's sexy. It's everything you could want from a Lucy Foley novel. One of the things I love most about this thriller Tavia is the way she depicts Paris, right? Because normally when we think about Paris, we think, you know, the city of lights, the city of dreams, the city of romance, but what she does here is something completely different. She exposes the dark seedy underbelly of Paris.

Tavia:

She totally does that. There's one part in the book where they go to this sort of like high class club. And even that is seedy and scuzzy, and you're like, Ooh, people are awful. Tagging off that, of that sort of common imagination that everyone has of Paris as this wonderful place with flowers and trees and sunny and you're strolling. And you know, you've got your Chanel bag. You've just bought a dress or something. But the temperature in this book is either hot or cold. It's never a nice day. It's always cold and windy or they're sweating and they're like waiting to get into a record store. And you know, it's like finally cool at the record store, but I thought that it, I was very uncomfortable, physically uncomfortable, the whole book.

Bianca:

I think that's a really smart way she manipulates tension and bring, you know exactly what you said, bringing that uncomfortable feeling. I think there's a lot of different ways you can do that either, you know, by big action or plot reveals, but it's so fun to see her do that through weather instead.

Tavia:

Another thing that I really loved while reading this book was the chapters were so short and I read this book, uh, like in chunks every night and it just kept me going. One chapter just led you into the next, I really like that structure for a thriller.

Bianca:

Yeah. And speaking about each chapter leading into the next, I think what she does here so well are the cliff hangers. They aren't exactly big plot reveals, but instead they are these, you know, emotional reveals that dig deeper into each character. You know, we're getting deeper into what these characters are hiding and what they know.

Tavia:

She also used those chapters, not only to like add those awesome cliff hangers that you're talking about, but as a way for us to really get into the minds of the different characters, because each chapter is told from the point of view of another character. And one of the things that sort of irritated me... Jess is the most likable character in the book. But one thing that irritated me is that she arrives in Paris and she's like immediately upset by her brother being missing. She knows something's off in her gut and she just like neglects herself in the pursuit of taking care of her brother and this, for whatever reason, I just wanted her so badly to take a shower, to make a hot meal, drink some water. She did none of that. She was like I'll have a beer. She wore the same grungy sweatshirt. She would brush her hair, but never wash it. Oh my gosh. And I just feel like there was this sort of juxtaposition of Jess with Sophie, who is the trophy wife who totally keeps herself up. Like she uses her personal care and her personal hygiene and her presentation as like a way to keep people away. And it's just interesting the way these two characters sort of each care for themselves differently and how it says so much about who they are in the course of this book.

Bianca:

If my sister were missing, I probably wouldn't shower either though.

Tavia:

Oh my God.

Bianca:

On a different note though, Tavia, one thing I love so much was how she twisted the idea of the missing girl plot. There are so many thrillers that center on missing girls. You know, they are seen as objects of lust and mystery and instead she shifts the conversation to focus on Ben, you know, this charismatic, sexy enigma of a man. I just think we're so overdone at heart of the single girl trope. And it's so refreshing to have it done to a man instead.

Tavia:

Totally. I appreciated that about the book. His character was like problematic as well. Like he wasn't the hundred percent lovable, big brother. Right? But my favorite thing about the book was the ending. There's all these twists. This is like a twist machine, this book, but she ties up every single loose end. You get to the book and you're like, what about that? Oh ding, what about that thing? Bing. What about that person? Oh, over there, like, okay. I find that so satisfying as a reader, I can't even, and sometimes you want there to be questions at the end, but no, this book I needed to know where everything was. It was great.

Bianca:

Absolutely. And again, I just think this is another example of a thriller writer at her best.

Tavia:

I cannot wait to talk to her. So before we move into the interview, Bianca, I'm going to toast you to welcome you to the show. Welcome aboard. It is so nice to have you. Cheers!

Bianca:

Cheers. We love hearing from our listeners. You can write and review the podcast on iTunes or Stitcher or wherever you're listening to this episode. And you can also participate in conversations about great books in the lively comments section of our Instagram feed @bookclubgirl.

Tavia:

Today we're joined by Lucy Foley whose book *The Paris Apartment* is out now. Welcome!

Bianca:

Lucy welcome to the Book Club Girl Podcast.

Lucy Foley:

Oh, thanks so much for having me.

Bianca:

Yes. We're so happy to have you on. So to get things started, Tavia and I were talking earlier about how we just love the Paris you depicted in the book, you know, it's dark and creepy and completely different from how other authors have novelized Paris in the past. We're not alone. In this opinion, one of our listeners, Julie, also wanted to hear more about the setting. She asked, "How did you decide to use Paris as a setting when your other books are in more rural settings?"

Lucy Foley:

Yes. It was a total change really in terms of setting, it kind of came about by happenstance. I was actually staying in Paris in an Airbnb while I was finishing the final draft of *The Guest List*. And that's something I like to do when, when I'm working on a book is kind of book myself a cheap Airbnb somewhere. And so I was staying in this creepy old Parisian apartment building, working on my laptop for all hours of the day and night. And I would hear these strange sounds coming from the apartment above me, like kind of scraping and sounds of something heavy being dragged across the floorboards. And obviously as a writer and a thriller writer, it just got me thinking, I was convinced someone was hiding a body. Maybe they were, maybe I should have called the police. I don't know, but it sparked the idea for *The Paris Apartment*. But I think I'd also been thinking I want to shake it up, do something new, have a setting that feels isolated in a different way. Part of a kind of urban environment that isolated in this whole new, new, new way.

Bianca:

Okay. So we wanna know more about the building too. And one of our listeners, Shelly also wanted to know more about the building itself. So she asked us, "Did you create the building where your characters are living based on research on a physical building or did you create the building in your mind to serve the story?"

Lucy Foley:

So a total mixture of all of those things I think. It was really inspired by this building that I stayed in on that kind of writing trip. There are things that have gone straight into the book, like time saving light switches, where you, you know, you press them and then you've got a timer and you can hear it clicking down. And you know, that suddenly any second you're gonna be plunged into darkness. Which is quite creepy. Things like the courtyards that you could look into from the apartment and all the, all the kind of different apartments looking into that sort of being able to see into other people's apartments that was also inspired by this building. But then there were other things that I wanted to add myself. So there's like a secret staircase. Maybe it had a secret staircase, but I never found it. And the cave beneath the building. So this sort of basement area. I also wanted to make it a bit more, the apartment building I was staying was wonderful, but slightly shabby. I wanted to make it a bit more kind of glamorous and fabulous and, and also spent a lot of time looking at images. Also when I went on my research trip to Paris, wandering around, looking at apartment buildings and sort of, I guess, building a kind of composite picture from all of those different apartments that inspired it.

Tavia:

I love it. I love it. I love the cover. I love the way that we get that sense of like the windows looking into the courtyard on the cover. You definitely have a feeling like a little head is gonna pop out from one of those windows. What are you looking at?

Lucy Foley:

Definitely.

Bianca:

Okay. So Lucy, one of the things I loved most about this book is how there are so many thrillers about young girls who go missing, but in yours we have Ben, you know, this charismatic sexy guy who goes missing instead, you've completely reversed the go-to dead girl plot and made it something new and brilliant. And I love it. How do you see this book in conversation with other missing girl thrillers?

Lucy Foley:

I'm so happy you said that because that was exactly what I wanted to do with it. You know, that was almost my very first idea. So, so the stay in Paris kind of inspired the setting for the book. But before I even had Paris, that was the germ of the idea for this book. It was like, I want a missing girl book, but I want it to be a missing boy. And how does that kind of flip things on its head? So yeah, it's a kind of new take on the genre, I suppose.

Bianca:

I love it. I hope this is the start of a new trend. Lucy starting new trends in the thriller space. Amazing.

Tavia:

You're listening to the Book Club Girl Podcast where our guest this week is Lucy Foley, whose book *The Paris Apartment* is out now. You can read more about Lucy's book at bookclubgirl.com

Bianca:

Coming up on the Book Club Girl Podcast. We ask Lucy about her affinity literary character. Stick around!

Tavia:

This episode of the Book Club Girl podcast is brought to you by a former guest, Peter Swanson, and his new book *Nine Lives*, the story of nine strangers who receive a cryptic list with their names on it, and then begin to die in highly unusual circumstances. *Nine Lives* is out in paperback now.

Bianca:

Welcome back to the show. Each week, we bring you a fascinating new conversation with an author who's written a book we think is a great choice for book clubs to read together. Today, bestselling author, Lucy Foley is here with us answering questions about the number one *New York Times* bestseller, *The Paris Apartment*.

Tavia:

I thought it was so interesting that when Jess finally went to the police with Nick, they were so unconcerned until they heard the voice message. They were probably like, oh, whatever he is just off for the weekend. He just left. You know? And I think they said that that was sort of like a French attitude, but I think it also had to do with the fact that he was a man. If it had been a young woman, it would've been a totally different reaction.

Lucy Foley:

Yeah. I mean, it's a completely different, yeah. It just completely reverses everything. Doesn't it bit of a long anecdote. But I remember once my husband and I were kind of walking home and we lived along this kind of very

dark street, dark, dark, quiet street. And we were walking over these train tracks, like over this bridge and we heard a scream, what we thought was a scream. And my husband's reaction to this was I'm gonna go and see what's going on. And my reaction was like, I'm gonna go and call the police. Yeah. And it just really struck me like how different our reactions were. Actually ended up being a fox in the end. So we had another one and it was, it was an animal. But I think that kind of encapsulates everything about the kind of different experiences for men and women.

Tavia:

Yeah. Out in the world. For sure. So as an apartment dweller myself, I pick up tidbits about my neighbor's lives. You know, I can't help it. Like you pass in the hallway or you hear them through the door when you're walking by, or, you know, they're talking on the phone as they're exiting the building. Our listener, Susan asks "Your novel, *The Paris Apartment* includes neighbors who raised suspicions. Have you ever had a neighbor who did something?"

Lucy Foley:

Oh gosh, I probably have to be really careful here. I really, um, cheese anyone off. So I have had some weird neighbors in my time. I think living in London, um, as I did previously, you were kind of living quite closely cheek by jowl with people. I remember one night, it was really hot and obviously there's no air con in like any of the UK. So we had all the windows open and we had a very strange conversation from the apartment next door to us. And it was a bit like we were like, we kind of feel like we should shut the windows, but at the same time, it's really hot. And at the same time, it's also sort of fascinating. Um, so it was this. Yeah, very weird. And then I did have a neighbor who used to go to kind of the loo, which was at the back of the house and you would hear kind of music playing at like really weird times of night, but that was also his loo? So I couldn't really work out what, what was going on in there. And it had a bit of a haunted house vibe out the front. It was sort of covered in ivy and no one ever really looked out or looked up. Very strange, just slightly Gothic.

Tavia:

I had the same thing where I have a fire escape outside my window. And I was like on there just, you know, one summer evening having wine, enjoying the evening, looking at the city. And I could hear my neighbor's entire conversation. And I was like, it was mostly a mundane conversation, but I was like, this just does not feel right. Like I should not hear this right now at all.

Lucy Foley:

Totally. It feels voyeuristic, doesn't it? Yeah.

Tavia:

Yeah. Like unintentionally.

Lucy Foley:

Absolutely. And I think sort of, you know, not to mention the, the COVID word too much, but I think being forced into sort of this lockdown situation several times over the past couple of years has sort of only exacerbated that like people have been forced to live too closely to each other. And so I think all sorts of weird things have sort of come out of that. Yeah, fascinating times we've been living in.

Tavia:

Totally. We were actually saying that when we were discussing the book, we were talking about it last week. And what we were saying is that the atmosphere in this building is very familiar, even though I don't live in danger. It's very familiar the sort of close stifling atmosphere because it is how we've all been living for the last two years.

Lucy Foley:

Absolutely.

Bianca:

Oh my goodness. I know we are all way too familiar with that sense of claustrophobia, these days.

Tavia:

Definitely.

Bianca:

Okay. So to switch things up a bit, I would love to talk to you about class and power. So once we are deeper into the book it's apparent that those two themes class and power play major roles as more secrets about each character are slowly revealed. Can you tell us a little bit more about how those themes are important in the book?

Lucy Foley:

So on the surface level, I think that kind of class dynamic has always been really interesting to me as a writer and in a way it's a kind of modern formulation of that sort of upstairs downstairs dynamic that you get in the kind of golden age murder mystery. If you think of the sort of maid listening at the keyhole, it's kind of doing that in a modern setting in *The Paris Apartment* specifically, we've got this concierge figure. And the concierge is a bit of a kind of outdated role now in Paris, but traditionally they were kind of everywhere in the city and they would be the kind of gatekeeper of these grand apartment buildings. They would receive the post. They would keep things ticking over. They would keep the place clean and they would receive visitors to the building. So they really were this sort of first kind of line of defense to the building. And we have that figure in *The Paris Apartment*, but I loved writing her because she's invisible to the inhabitants of this apartment building. And because she's invisible, she has a kind of strange sort of power because they aren't aware how much she sees, how much she knows about them. And, and really it makes them kind of vulnerable in a way to her. So yeah, it was great fun to kind of write that role. And I also think if you've ever been a waitress, a waiter, a waitress worked, worked in a shop, done any kind of role in like the service industries. You see the way which I did a lot of when I was kind of in my teens, early twenties, you see the way people treat you or certain people treat you. They literally don't see you as a person. And the things that you hear as a result, you know, there are things that it's given me so much material for life as a writer, um, some of those characters that you cover across. Um, so I think there's something interesting there as well.

Tavia:

So this leads me right into my next question, which is my favorite thing about your novel, which is at the end of the book, there does not remain a single loose end. Every question I had about any character or any situation is completely answered in those final pages, when everything comes together. I loved all the different perspectives of the characters throughout the book. One thing that sent me into a total panic was pretty early on in the book, Jess runs out of minutes on her phone and I am addicted to my phone to the idea of not having minutes is like, no, like worse than my brother being missing. Right? So why did you do this to poor Jess? Why did she not have her phone?

Lucy Foley:

So on a very boring, practical level, as a writer. With this book, I'd set myself up with a kind of, I suppose, a number of, of kind of problems that I needed to fix. So with the other two books, my characters were literally removed from the rest of the world. They were sort of in these isolated settings. But I wanted to find ways to make Jess feel kind of more and more isolated. That sounds really horrible, but you know, she needed to feel that all of the avenues available her were sort of being shut down. One of those just on the surface is that she doesn't speak the language. So she barely speaks a word of French. So all these conversations are going on around her, which sound potentially a little bit suspicious, but she doesn't know what's actually being said. So that's kind of one point of remove for her. Then there's the fact that her phone signal goes down. Then just the apartment building and its atmosphere in general. So it's kind of all of these different things. And there's also the fact that she, for various reasons that I won't go into now, cause they're spoilery, doesn't trust the police. So the first thing that I would probably do being like a good girl, if I got into this apartment building and there was this kind of situation, I would probably call the police. A good girl and a coward, I should say. I'd love to think that I would be like, Jess, I feel like I'm going to kind of sleuth this

out myself, but that's what I would do. But, uh, it's not really something she feels particularly comfortable doing. So she doesn't really trust the police from the outset. So yeah, all of those different things are kind of part and parcel of, of the mystery.

Tavia:

Poor Jess, poor, poor Jess. So we have one final question for you, Lucy, every episode we ask an author, if you could be any character from any novel who you be?

Lucy Foley:

So that's an amazing question. And there are so many characters whose heads I would like to step into or his lives I would like to step into, but I'm actually gonna choose Miss Marple from multiple books in fact, but I just think she's such a fascinating character. So I have to say I wasn't as kind of au fait of the Miss Marple series as I was with Poirot before I recently wrote a short story for this new Miss Marple collection coming out. And I had to kind of step into Miss Marple's shoes. And it was just such fun because she's such an interesting character and kind of so in Agatha Christie's depiction of her, so ahead of her time, because she's this elderly woman. She's again, kind of invisible to a lot of those around her. They just see her as a sort of dodderly elderly, foolish old woman. And she's actually this brilliant, brilliant mind, brilliant detective mind. And she uses the fact that people kind of underestimate her to her advantage. I just think she's fascinating. And I would also love her kind of powers of deduction.

Tavia:

I love that. I, I think that is such a good answer. And it's so fitting for you knowing the kind of books that you write. It's just perfect.

Lucy Foley:

Thank you.

Tavia:

Lucy, thank you so much for coming on the show. It was an absolute treat having you, we are so honored. Congratulations on all your success with your books and we can't to see what's next from you.

Lucy Foley:

Thanks so much for having me. I had such fun chatting to you guys and thanks for your brilliant questions.

Tavia:

Yay.

Lucy Foley:

Oh, really enjoyed it.

Bianca:

Yes, Lucy, thank you so much for being here.

Tavia:

That was Lucy Foley, whose book the number one *New York Times* bestselling *The Paris Apartment* is out now. To find out more about *The Paris Apartment* and Lucy Foley's other mystery novels, head to bookclubgirl.com/podcast, where you can also find links to everything mentioned in this episode.

Bianca:

Like what you heard? Subscribe on iTunes, Spotify, Stitcher, wherever you get your podcast. And while you're there, give us a rating and leave a review. Another way to help spread the word about the Book Club Girl podcast, tell a friend! It really helps others to find us.

Tavia:

You'll hear from us again in one week where we'll be speaking with Peng Shepherd, critically acclaimed author of the fantasy thriller *The Cartographers*. If you want to read the book before its podcast drops, head over to hc.com and use promo code BOOKCLUBGIRL, all one word for 25% off and free shipping for any book discussed on this podcast.

Bianca:

We love hearing from our listeners, email us at the girls at book club girl dot com or post in the comments on our Instagram feed @bookclubgirl, you can also leave us a voicemail. Our number is 2 1 2 2 0 7 7 3 3 6. Your voicemail or email could very well end up being read on the show.

Tavia:

We would love to hear from you before we go. We'd like to thank Caroline Kwash of the Hanger Studios who produced today's episode and Roscelia Ryan, our amazing editor and audio engineer. Many thanks to Amelia Wood and Francie Crawford for all their excellent help launching season two and a legacy shoutout to my former co-host Eliza Rosenberry.

Bianca:

Until next time I'm Bianca

Tavia:

And I'm Tavia.

Bianca:

Happy reading.