

Transcript of Book Club Girl Podcast, Season 2

Episode 3: Sally Thorne on *The Hating Game*

Tavia:

Welcome to the Book Club Girl podcast, where we chat about great books with awesome authors and you our listeners get to ask the questions. I'm Tavia Kowalchuk, and today we're reading a really fun book that's set in an office, which got me thinking about other books I've read that are set in an office. And I couldn't think of one, but one that I heard that's really good is *Severance* by Ling Ma. It's a novel that came out during the pandemic and it is also partially set in an office. And there's a little bit of book publishing I hear as well. So that's definitely one that I could check out to complete this category on my reading list.

Bianca:

And I'm Bianca Flores. Tavia, I read *Severance* and it's so good. So it didn't come out during the pandemic, but it is a pandemic novel. And so a lot of people were talking about it during the, of course, during the pandemic at the beginning. So it feels very, you know, of the pandemic, but it's so funny that you mentioned that one because you know, it partially takes place in publishing. And one of the books that I was thinking of that took place in an office is another publishing book. I thought of *Luster* by Raven Leilani. Which happens, you know, to be one of the most, I mean, incredibly absorbing reading experiences I've ever had. It's like incredibly evocative and addictive. And of course, since it takes place, I found it really fun to dip into.

Tavia:

I cannot wait to talk about this workplace romcom. And it's about an arch nemesis relationship that evolves from rivalry to love. And later in the show, we'll be joined by *USA Today* bestselling author, Sally Thorne.

Bianca:

Oh, I'm so excited. So before we dive into this week's episode, we also want to share one of our Book Club Girl reviews from a listener who calls herself "Old lady book club girl." She writes to us, "I had been receiving Book Club Girl emails for some time before I decided to try the podcast. Imagine my surprise to find out how young the girls are considering that I'm 70 and we read the same books. The formula for the episode is perfect. You know, synopsis, interview with questions, and an audio excerpt. The girls are excellent reviewers and are careful not to give away spoilers. They don't put themselves too much into their interviews, but let the authors take the lead and say what they want to about their books. And the audio excerpt usually sells me on the book. One bit of constructive criticism. The T in often is silent." I am totally guilty for this. I definitely pronounce the T. Um, <laugh> but with that said, uh, we appreciate your feedback. Old lady book club girl. And thank you so much for listening.

Tavia:

I love that our listeners are all ages and now I have to go back and listen to I the offender, or was it Eliza? Do I say often or often? I think I say often.

Bianca:

<laugh> I feel like I'm an offender. I definitely say the T.

Tavia:

<laugh> you do. Well, I appreciate the tip. I'm always happy to sound smarter than I actually am.

Bianca:

Me too. <laugh> So with that said, we now present to you *The Hating Game*, abridged.

Tavia:

Lucy and Josh are both attractive, smart, intimidating people who are working for the same publishing company, their desks face each other, and yet they cannot stand the site of each other. Every day is filled with snarky comments and rude expressions. This is a hating game they seem to enjoy playing. They act like most people wish they could to some of their coworkers. An opportunity within the company arises, so naturally Lucy and Josh are up for the competition. The opportunity is a really exciting new job. They decide that if one of them gets the job, the other has to quit theirs. Soon enough, their hateful tension reveals itself in an unexpected moment of passion. And they find themselves in a position, no pun intended, they never thought they would be in. A moment of unexpected passion leads to more, a lot more: an invite to his brother's wedding. And Lucy is now wondering if she has ever hated Josh at all. Maybe he doesn't hate her either, or maybe this is just another version of their game. It's all delightfully confusing. So Bianca, what did you think of the book?

Bianca:

Oh my goodness. Tavia. I love this book so much. So it's the second time I read it and honestly it's still my favorite romcom. Um, she really takes, you know, the idea of comedy to a whole new level, even though it's the second time I read it, I found myself laughing, you know, just as much, if not more and really stuck with me in like more ways than just it being funny. Like for example, like whenever I'm sad, I like to think of Lucy and Josh at Sky Diamond Strawberries or a villa in Tuscany just to bring me some extra joy. Love it.

Tavia:

Oh my gosh. No, I totally agree. She brings this like next level energy of the enemies to love trope. It is just pure romcom goodness. It reminds me of some of the early, early books that came out in the genre before it was called romcom. When they used to call it chick lit, dare I say it out loud. But the repartee between Lucy and Josh was amazing. And up until the very end, I still didn't know who was going to get the job of CFO and how it -- or COO, I think it was COO -- and how it was all going to work out.

Bianca:

I know, I think it's funny, right? Because you know, with these romcoms, you kind of, you kind of know slash respect that they're going to end up together and it's going to be great and all of that, but we didn't really know who was going to get the job or anything like that. So I feel like that was really smart for her to weave that in, you know, that extra business storyline for extra like suspense and tension. I mean, it was just brilliant.

Tavia:

<laugh> I agree. And I so enjoyed the publishing house setting. I mean, it is unrealistic the way that they went from being assistants to the CEO, to being a COO? Like that is like, really you're going to consider your assistant for a COO position? <Laugh> Okay. I would like that job trajectory. Um, but I really laughed so hard when, when that was presented as like a possibility,

Bianca:

I was going say, I feel like there are so many reasons why I want this book to be real, just because I love the idea of like such true passion and love, but that's definitely not the reason why I wanted the book to be real. I'm like, yes, let's all just be promoted to like these big glamorous positions, you know, like let's, let's just do it, like, come on, give it to us, Sally. <laugh>

Tavia:

Have you ever talked to a COO? I don't think it's very glamorous actually. <laugh>

Bianca:

At least that there's this level of importance, right? So <laugh>, that makes me, that brings me joy.

Tavia:

I loved the ending in the book. I loved it so much. There was only one, one thing I thought was missing in the book at the very end that isn't necessary, but it just would've been satisfying to me as a reader, I'm not gonna say it. I don't wanna ruin anything for people who haven't read the book. To all of our listeners, please join us as we toast each other. Cheers to you, Bianca, as we get ready to talk to our guest, Sally Thorne in just a minute.

Bianca:

Yay!

Tavia:

Cheers.

Bianca:

So we love hearing from our listener. You can write and review the podcast on iTunes or a Stitcher or wherever you're listening to this episode. And you can also participate in conversations about great books in the lively, common section of the Instagram feed @bookclubgirl.

Tavia:

Today we're joined by Sally Thorne whose book *The Hating Game* is out now.

Bianca:

Welcome Sally to the Book Club Girl podcast.

Sally Thorne:

Hi guys. Thanks for having me joining you here from Australia. Hello.

Bianca:

Oh, love it. We're so happy to have you. All right. So let's get right to it, Sally. Of course *The Hating Game* uses the enemies to lovers trope, but what I actually want to talk to you about first is friendship. So one of the parts that I found, you know, really most touching is towards the beginning of the book, Lucy simply wishes she and Josh could be friends. I just found that so touching, can you tell us a little bit about how the idea of friendship plays a role in the book?

Sally Thorne:

Well, I guess *The Hating Game* is really to a large extent, a story about loneliness and two lonely people that, uh, have made their work their priority. And they are looking for friends. Lucy lost a lot of her friends in the merger and Josh is just too intimidating and imposing to make friends I assume. And in a way I think both styles of people can be hard to get to know. Lucy is really, you know, probably a pretty over the top friend and, you know, she's a, a cupcake bringer and a, a people pleaser. So they're, they're at different ends of the spectrum. And I think both types of people probably might have trouble making real friendships.

Bianca:

That's so true. I didn't think about how they approach friendships so differently. Right. And I feel like it's kind of that whole opposites attract idea that kind of falls into friendship as well as, as you know, the whole, the whole love angle to this.

Tavia:

I could really relate to her desire to be friends with someone in the office. Sometimes it just isn't reciprocated your desire to have friendship. And so I could, I could relate to her her wish that, that he would just be nice to her.

Bianca:

Oh, that's so true.

Tavia:

One of the things that I loved about this book was the way that you used setting to define the characters. For example, like the office is really hostile. It has all shiny hard echo-y surfaces, but yet Lucy's apartment is a total mess and not really decorated very much. And Josh's is, you know, it's like an interior designer went in and took care of it. And of course it's neat as a pin. Why did you choose these settings for the three primary environments?

Sally Thorne:

I guess in a book where much of the storyline takes place in three rooms, you have to differentiate them. And really, I often think that this book would've been a great play. Like it has such few settings. I can really imagine it on a stage just with those three simple sets. I mean, I know that they go to a wedding offsite later, but for most of the book, the office is the entire world. And I think the, the hardness and the shininess of the office just is to highlight that Lucy does not feel comfortable there yet. The two sides of the company have merged and moved into this new building. And it's just like a totally alien environment for her. So just to keep her feeling a little bit off kilter in a place that she doesn't feel comfortable, and she has to sit opposite someone who is like an emotionless robot, but you know, a person's private space is a glimpse into their own inner life. I think. So. That's why we see Lucy's is a bit of a mess. Josh is, is almost too neat. I don't know when you're writing a book, you just try to use any tool that you can to color in the world. And yeah. I'm glad you picked up on those elements that I wrote.

Bianca:

Yeah. I feel like there's so many details when it comes to the settings that they really feel like characters in themselves, but now I need *The Hating Game*, the play. <laugh> I need, I need the play for this now. <laugh>

Sally Thorne:

I know Broadway next, coming 2023.

Tavia:

<laugh> Fantastic. Yes, please.

Sally Thorne:

Not really.

Tavia:

<laugh>. So every now and then our listeners submit questions for the podcast and we got a ton of questions for *The Hating Game*. Our listeners were totally into this. So we picked some of the best ones for you. Janessa her question is, "Romance novels have a lot of tropes. What are your favorite romance tropes as an author and how do you keep that trope fresh and new when writing it more than once?"

Sally Thorne:

My favorite trope overall is forced proximity. If the back of the book says these two people are going to get trapped down a mine shaft for three weeks together, I'll buy that book. <laugh> So all of my books, all three that have published all have a forced proximity element to it, I like keeping it all in one world. I like to keep them in those four walls together. And I think what I do best is two characters in a room staring at each other. Like that's kind of my wheelhouse. So in terms of how you keep it fresh each time, I guess I personally... You'll probably have noticed that

each book is different to the last., When I wrote *The Hating Game*, I had to make a decision like, am I just going to keep writing *The Hating Game* or a variant of *The Hating Game* over and over again? Or am I going to write things that are really different? So for me, it was really important to always write really different things because every job I've ever had, I got really bored really fast. So this is the coolest job in the entire world. And I never want to get bored.

Tavia:

Sally. We were saying earlier, when we were talking about, about *The Hating Game*, just me and Bianca, how much we both loved the dialogue between Lucy and Josh. And I think now that you say it, you talk about the false proximity trope in putting the characters in this like confined space. I can totally see how that would beget this incredible dialogue that you wrote for them. I just think they have the best dialogue. I mean, your dialogue is, is amazing.

Sally Thorne:

Oh, well thank you for saying in that. In the first few drafts of *The Hating Game*, the dialogue wasn't very good at all. Um, and when I read through it, it was many, many pages of just Lucy's internal dialogue. Um, so in redrafts I had to really focus on the dialogue because it wasn't something that I was strong at. Um, so *The Hating Game* was an example that if you just continually focus in on something that you know, that is not your strength and you just keep trying to refine it, eventually it'll come good.

Bianca:

It's so funny. It's, it's hard to think that the dialogue was like had a moment where it wasn't good, because to me it just reads so organic and you know, smooth that it's weird to think that you had to work hard on it. I'm like it, it feels like it just flew right out of you. <laugh> That's funny to think.

Tavia:

You're listening to the Book Club Girl podcast where our guest this week is Sally Thorne and whose book *The Hating Game* is out. Now you can read more about Sally's books at bookclubgirl.com

Bianca:

And coming up on the Book Club Girl podcast, we ask Sally about her affinity literary character. Stick around!

Tavia:

This episode of the Book Club Girl podcast is brought to you by our friends at the Pop Fiction Women podcast.

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 Sally Thorne is here with us answering questions about her romance novel, *The Hating Game*.

Tavia:

I loved that fact when Lucy stood up for herself and I took it as emblematic, that, that she acted this way once, so therefore she had the strength to do it going forward. Another favorite scene that I had in the book was when Josh took care of Lucy, when she got the food poisoning after paint ball. It was such a satisfying scene to read and to be immersed in, they each dropped their defenses. And I just wanted more of that. Did you have fun writing that scene? And, and what was your favorite scene in the book to write?

Sally Thorne:

Well, sick scene is a, a very popular trope, of course. Um, there's quite a few tropes in this book and I love sick scenes. I love, I love that he got to come into her apartment and see the true chaos that was there. And initially when I was drafting it, I started to write it that Josh had the food poisoning, but I, I probably just drafted the scene out with him

being sick. <Laugh> But it just didn't work because we are in Lucy's head for the entire book and we have to experience the true mortification of waking up the next morning and hastily putting that armor back on and throwing him out of her apartment. Um, to get them to take a step back because this book is, this book is a big game and it's a big two steps forward, one step back throughout the whole thing. It was nice to see him being his true self, which was tender and caring and drawing on his own previous skills of how to take care of a sick person and what he's learned from his parents. I'm sure because they were doctors.

Tavia:

I loved every single word of that scene.

Bianca:

Ugh, me too. Oh my gosh. Okay. So speaking of scenes, our fans are curious about your thoughts on *The Hating Game* movie, and they would like to know, you know, what were your favorite scenes in the adaptation of the novel?

Sally Thorne:

Well, loved it and I can honestly say that. I was scared when I got the rough, I was scared, but also I, I knew that I hadn't set out to write a movie. You know, if I'd wanted to write a movie, I should have, um, gone to a screenwriting class and written my own script. I didn't, I wrote a book and this was a whole big other team's take and they've taken my book and they've been inspired by it. I've obviously read the script and had a chance to make notes on it. And I knew that it was really close to the book. And so when I watched it, I just loved it. It was my only chance to be like you guys, and to experience the story for the first time, myself as an audience member, rather than seeing everything that happened behind the scenes of me trying to tie this big tapestry together. So I loved it. I felt like it was really true to the book. It kept that kind of quiet weirdness to it, kept the, the office as the world. And my favorite scene, um, was definitely the paintball scene because I loved that it was snowing when they were filming. I had quite a few people write to me saying, I think they've made an error. There was no snow mentioned in the book. And I'm like, well guys, like they have to work with what they've got, and it looked great. The visual of the white snow and you know, like the paintballs and I just thought such a cool take. I loved it. And I also loved any scene that the character of Danny was in. That actor just totally stole the whole movie for me. He was a scene-stealer. He was so funny and awkward and yes, such a, a great alternative option for Lucy presenting as like a really viable love triangle. So I thought they did a great job and I loved it. My mom loved it and that's the most important thing she had a blast. Um, so yeah.

Tavia:

Yay.

Bianca:

I love that. You mentioned Danny, because I also thought I just liked the way they adapted him into the movie so much. I totally agree. He's so awkward, but also like charming. I just thought it was a really nice fit <laugh> So we have two other questions about the movie, thanks to Alana Elizabeth and Melissa, our listeners. So those questions are, is there any part of the book that didn't make it into the movie that you wish they did include? And if you could make one change about the movie, what would it be?

Sally Thorne:

No, I think that they got all of the high points, all of the, the good scenes into the movie. There's an entire scene in the book where they just sit on the couch and watch a TV show. And even when I was writing the book, when I finally had an editor, I was like that scene's gonna be the first one to go. No, one's gonna read a chapter about people watching TV, but be, was like, it all works in a weird way. <laugh> She let me have it. And I was like, oh, okay. So, I mean, I guess if I had to say like what I would've enjoyed their interpretation of, I guess it would've been the TV watching scene. <laugh> Where they sit there in silence and then hold hands and then she goes home. <Laugh> But you can see why things like that may not translate so well into a, a movie scene. Yeah. And, uh, I mean, obviously I couldn't travel to be there. I couldn't do a set visit. I, I, I would've if I could have, so I mean, if I could change anything, I would totally have

been in the bookshop, like doing a bit of a Stephanie Meyer in Twilight cameo. Like maybe I was in the background selling a coffee or something like that, or maybe delivering a parcel in the background, or it could be the receptionist at B and G. That's what I wish I could have changed. I wish I could have been there and experienced it in person.

Tavia:

Well, congratulations on the success of the book and, and on the movie being made. And I just can't wait to see the buzz sort of bubble up all over. I've already seen some really funny TikToks. So I think, I think it's going to be good.

Bianca:

So I'm already like dying to read all of your books, Sally. So your latest book, 99% Mine was of course another success. So we've got to hear, are there any other future projects we can get excited about?

Sally Thorne:

My next book is a bit of a, a right hand turn from my first three books. I think most authors wrote a really strange book during lockdown and I was no exception. So I presented my editor with a book entitled *Angelica Frankenstein Makes Her Match* and everything you need to know about it is in the title. Victor Frankenstein, who we of course know from the literary hall of fame, thank you, Mary Shelley. I had a random idea one day. What if he had a sister and while he was doing his, um, you know, world changing experiments, he was helping her to basically make a husband. And I just really went for it. And it's a it's historical it's set in 1814, it's obviously a historical, hopefully it's funny. And, um, it was inspired by my doll house, which is just behind me here. If you can see this doll house here.

Tavia:

Yes! That's beautiful.

Bianca:

Yeah. Thank you. Yes, it's um, one of my passions and so the house in the book is inspired by my doll house. I really had to work with what I had during lockdown and I was stuck in this room. So I hope that people, I hope people are open for it. It's gonna come out in September of this year, which is sort of getting towards your fall and your spooky season. And yeah, it's a whole lot of vibes. And what would you do if you could build a man from the ground up? <Laugh>

Tavia:

Oh my gosh. That they would take out the recycling that's number one. <laugh>

Bianca:

Yes. Do the laundry, take out the recycling.

Sally Thorne:

Mm-hmm <affirmative> mm-hmm <affirmative> Oh my gosh.

Tavia:

Sally, we have one final question for you. Every episode we ask an author, if you could be any character from any novel, who would you be?

Sally Thorne:

Okay. This is a hard question, obviously, but I'm gonna say I would be Emma Woodhouse in Jane Austen's Emma. I would love that life. I would love to be a cute rich girl, um, living in my mansion, just pop downstairs, have a cup of tea with my cute dad, and then just wander around the village all day long, looking fine in my incredible outfit. Mr.

Knightley would come over in the afternoons and we'd all sit around and laugh and have dinner and you'd get to look at him and, and I'd call the carriage whenever I wanted. I would have a lot of hot baths and I love that life for me. So that's my answer. <laugh>

Tavia:

I love that life for you, too.

Bianca:

Such, such a good choice

Tavia:

I love that life for you. Yes.

Bianca:

Oh my goodness. We all need that life. Absolutely such a good choice. Um, Sally, it was so nice to have you on the podcast. I am going to read *The Hating Game* for a third time now. So thank you so much for joining us.

Sally Thorne:

Thank you so much.

Tavia:

As I said, at the beginning, we weren't recording, but I love this book so much. It was such a surprise to me and I'm just so happy it came into my life. So thank you for joining us on the podcast, Sally, it was a real treat to talk about this book with you.

Sally Thorne:

Thank you guys.

Tavia:

That was Sally Thorne, whose book *The Hating Game* is out now. To find out more about *The Hating Game* and her new book *Angelica Frankenstein Makes Her Match* 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 Susan Elizabeth Phillips author of the bestselling book, *When Stars Collide*. If you want to read the book before its podcast drops, head over to hc.com and use promo code BOOKCLUBGIRL for 25% off and free shipping for any book discussed on this podcast. That's all one word BOOKCLUBGIRL, all caps.

Bianca:

And 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:

Before we go. We'd like to thank Caroline Kwash of The Hanger Studios who produced today's episode and our editor and audio engineer, Roscelia Ryan.

Bianca:

Until next time I'm Bianca

Tavia:

And I'm Tavia

Bianca:

Happy reading.