

Transcript of Book Club Girl Podcast, Season 2

Episode 6: Tracey Livesay on *Like Lovers Do*

Bianca:

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 Bianca Flores, and the book we're discussing today got me missing the beach so much. I am originally from Honolulu. And so anything about the beach, I just absolutely am obsessed with. So the book that actually came to mind when I was reading this was *You, Me, and the Sea* by Meg Donohue, which is this, you know, really beautiful contemporary re-imagining of *Wuthering Heights* set at the seaside in Northern California. So kind of similar to where I'm living now in San Francisco. Um, and I often still find myself thinking of the ocean descriptions in the book to this day. They are just that beautiful.

Tavia:

Oh my gosh. I know. Although hard to beat, uh, the ocean from Honolulu. <Laugh> I'm Tavia Kowalchuk and I am just like you, Bianca. Take me to the beach any day, summer or winter in fiction or in real life. It is my happy place. And the book that *Like Lovers Do* made me think of is another book set in Martha's Vineyard. It's by *The View* cohost Sunny Hostin, and it's called *Summer on the Bluffs*. And it's her debut novel. It's set in Oak Bluffs, which is a neighborhood on Martha's Vineyard, which is historically a Black neighborhood. And I mean the beach scenes are amazing. The summer lifestyle is amazing, but what she really does so well in this book is she really sort of casts this really sharp eye on the sort of societal norms of Martha's Vineyard and the expectations of that sort of little microcosm of society. It's really a great book. It's like a beach read plus it's also very thoughtful and it makes you think about stuff. It's really, really good.

Bianca:

I haven't read that, but I've heard amazing things. So it is on my to-read list at the top. <laugh>

Tavia:

And I can't wait for this.

Bianca:

I heard such good things.

Tavia:

I know it's so good. You have to read it.

Bianca:

So on today's show, we'll be discussing this friends to lovers meets fake dating romance. And later in the show we'll be joined by award-winning contemporary romance author, Tracey Livesay.

Tavia:

Before we dive into this week's episode, I just want to remind all of our listeners that you can buy any or all of the books that we discuss on this show at a 25% discount with free shipping. So if you go to hc.com and use the promo code BOOKCLUBGIRL, all one word you can stock up on these engrossing and discussable reads. It's a pretty good deal. So I would say, go for it.

Bianca:

Yes. I love anything at a 25% discount. And especially if it's books, you can definitely sign me up. <laugh>

Tavia:

I'm all about the free shipping. Honestly, it kills me to pay shipping, so...

Bianca:

Ugh.

Tavia:

Totally. I would do it just for that.

Bianca:

<laugh>

Tavia:

And now we present to you *Like Lovers Do* abridged.

Bianca:

Dr. Nicole Allen is a driven and accomplished orthopedic surgeon. Even with a tough past, Nic's gone above and beyond everyone's expectations. During her three-year residency at Johns Hopkins, she has rented a room in Benjamin Reed Van Mont's house. He's the black sheep of his family, having chosen to become a financial advisor against the wishes of his parents who own a medical business empire. Nic has just three weeks left in her residency when she disciplines an intern, a powerful donor's son, and a prestigious fellowship she's awaiting in Durham. North Carolina is placed in jeopardy. When Ben offers to ask his to intervene on her behalf with the leadership in Durham, Nic can't just accept the favor from her dear friend. Instead, she offers to act as his girlfriend for a week-long vacation in Martha's Vineyard with Ben's childhood friends among them will be Ben's ex, the pushy self-centered and status-climbing Tinsley. They hope that Nic's presence will discourage Tinsley's advances. But the charade proves tricky for them, both as unacknowledged and unexplored feelings start to surface now that they are both away from their work. Ben has vowed to not get involved with a career woman as he wants a dedicated mother for his children. And Nic feels indebted to herself and her mother, who worked two jobs, her whole life, to not put her success as a surgeon at risk for anyone will the romantic setting of Martha's Vineyard get the better of Ben and Nic who each have strong yet different visions for their futures. So Tavia, what did you think of the book?

Tavia:

Okay. Before I tell you: first, as an aside, I just have to say that Tinsley is the absolute worst. Okay.

Bianca:

Yes really she is.

Tavia:

Yes. Moving on. So. So I love how it says on the cover that this is a girls' trip novel, and I love this concept. It frames the book. It starts out with all these friends on a girls' trip, all these girlfriends. And those friendships resurfaced during the drama of the novel to support and center Nic. They're like her touchstone at these key points in the book. I can totally relate to this. I am a dedicated girls' tripper myself. You know, Bianca, we were laughing earlier when we were prepping for this episode, because in this month alone, I'm going on two girls' trips.

Bianca:

I'm so jealous.

Tavia:

Two different girls' trips. And I think, you know, I'm overdoing it a little bit, because there were no girls' trips during the pandemic, but I'm like back in the swing of it.

Bianca:

<laugh>

Tavia:

And, these are the moments in my friendships with these women that like cement, cement, our relationship. And I just, I just think it's brilliant that that Tracey has made this sort of a cornerstone of, of these books. And I think it's an essential part of many women's lives.

Bianca:

I couldn't agree more. I went on a girls' trip early or like later last year and I'm like desperate for my next one. I am so jealous that you have so many coming up. Um, and I love that she used it for her opening. I think it's just such a nice way to enter any book. And I also feel like this book really served as a celebration of friendship in more ways than one Tavia. You know, we have the friend groups, of course we have, like, you were just, you know, Nic's friend group, but we also have Ben's friend group and more importantly, we have Nic and Ben's friendship, which is just, you know, so steamy. <Laugh>

Tavia:

I know it's funny. It's like, I was just gonna say putting friendship aside, those sex scenes were amazing.

Bianca:

Oh my God, Tavia. Yes.

Tavia:

Also, also not quite the same, but I really appreciated that these characters cursed, they said bad words. I am totally down with profanity. I use it in my own life and I just, it just gave a sense of realism to these characters. And I was like, yes, they're talking the way I talk. I really...

Bianca:

Oh my God. Yeah.

Tavia:

I just appreciated that she... And it wasn't over the top. They weren't dropping the F-bomb at every turn in the book, but it was just, it was appropriate when it showed up. And I really appreciated that. It takes, I think it's hard for a writer to like use cuss words in a way that like isn't, they don't jump out at you.

Bianca:

Right. In a way that's not distracting or taking you out of the story. Right. I totally agree. It felt really authentic, but yes, those, you know, sex scenes were so steamy and I really feel like they were the steamiest I've ever read. I was like, oh my goodness. She's just really getting into it.

Tavia:

Yeah Bianca's got her fan going. She's like, woo! Woo!

Bianca:

Yeah, whoo! I can't be reading this out in public. Someone's going to see. <Laugh> But on a different note, Tavia. I also really loved how Nic was so determined to put her career first before love. It just, I don't know. It just reminded me a lot of how I felt during high school and college. I was just like, no, I, I, you know, again, growing up in Honolulu, there's not, there's no publishing. And so I was like, I need to get outta here, I need to go. I need to work in publishing. I need to work really hard and like get there and do that. It's not going to be easy. And so I felt very similar. Again, it's nothing like being a surgeon, but I, I just understand, you know, that sense of needing to be focused and determined. And it was just really nice to see that reflected here.

Tavia:

I have mad respect for Nic and her mom. I mean, they are fierce, amazing women who were left to take care of themselves. And Nic, you know, jumped social strata. Her mom worked two jobs. They didn't have a lot. And her mom sacrificed a ton to send her daughter to school and pay for excellent universities. And like I actually personally don't know how much you have to sacrifice to do that for your child. And I, I just really respected these characters from the get-go. And I, I really like that there are women like this in this book and you get to see them thrive and succeed and you know, enjoy the fruits of all of their hard work.

Bianca:

Totally. I also just wanted to hang out with them. I was like, you are incredible women. Like we need to hang out.

Tavia:

I'm like getting all serious. You're like, let's just have a beer.

Bianca:

Let's hang out, like teach me your ways. You're incredible. <laugh> Um, but we can't end this conversation without talking about the roommate romance part of this too. I just felt like a lot of people can relate to that, especially during COVID. I feel like I know. Or I heard, I feel like I heard a lot of stories about roommates getting together, or maybe not necessarily roommates, but people who lived in like the same building getting together during, you know, the, the really, really hard early parts of COVID because they, you know, people couldn't go out and see each other. And so there was a lot of, you know, roommate romances happening. So I feel like in a way, this is, this is very timely.

Tavia:

That is so funny. Yeah. I have never had a romance with a roommate, but I have heard of people that do and it's definitely, it's definitely a trope and Tracey handles it really well in this book. Bianca, I am going to toast us. So that one day we will have a girls' day at the beach.

Bianca:

Yes, let's do it!

Tavia:

Cheers to that.

Bianca:

Cheers.

Tavia:

We love hearing from our listeners, you can rate and review the Book Club Girl 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 comment section of our Instagram feed at book girl. So follow us, join the conversation and hey, if you want to hang out with me some more I'm @taviareads on Instagram.

Bianca:

Today, we're joined by Tracey Livesay whose book *Like Lovers Do* is out now.

Tavia:

Tracey, welcome to the Book Club Girl podcast. We are so glad you're here with us.

Tracey Livesay:

Thank you for having me. I'm so excited. Really am.

Tavia:

Like Lovers Do is the second novel in your girls' trip series. For people who haven't read the books in the series, what can they expect?

Tracey Livesay:

So the girls' trip series is a series of books based on my own, um, friendship with the group of women that I went to college with. And so we met our first year of college and um, quite by sort of accident and became really good friends, stayed friends throughout all of college. And after we graduated, we really did end up going on vacation together. Again, it was purely by accident and uh, we had such a good time that we said, well, we have to do this again next year. And it just turned into this thing. And so when I'd mentioned that just in passing to my editor, like this is what I do. She was like, that's a great idea for series. And so what the book tries to do is give the reader a sense of that friendship. So each book starts with a chapter of the women on vacation. So you get to know them and get an idea of how they interact with each other. And then the remaining part of the book is the love story of one of, of the women. And the women, you know, will play a part in each person's story because they're best friends. So they'll be calling, you know, getting advice and that sort of thing. Um, but it's, you know, it's a way to sort of bring that friendship that I have, that people seem to really sort of respond to and be surprised by to bring that into, you know, romance novels, which I, which I really love.

Tavia:

I loved it so much. Bianca and I have gone on and on about this because I have been taking girls' trips with this one group of friends for decades, literally decades. And they're such a meaningful part of my life. And I just thought, you, you nailed it. Like you totally got the girls' trip vibe in this book. And I love the way that these friendships come back at key moments to support Nic. Like they're, they're there when she needs, when she needs them. And I also got the sense that, you know, these women could be apart for a whole year and, and it's like nothing it's like no time passed. And so I really, I really agree with your editor. It's a brilliant idea.

Tracey Livesay:

Thank you. <laugh> Thank you. And that, and that, yeah, that's really true.

Tavia:

So you've listened to past episodes of the podcast. So hopefully you've realized that we appreciate diverse voices and diverse representation in the fictional characters of the books that we read. And you are known for writing interracial romances. I would love to hear more about this, this choice or like you fell into it. I just would love to know more about that.

Tracey Livesay:

Yeah. So it is, it is a choice and it isn't. So I think the reason I ended up writing interracial is that my husband is white. And so when we were dating, I'm reading the genre that I love the most and I'm trying to find our relationship reflected in the books and I couldn't anywhere. And if I did, then the stories were always about race, right? So the main conflict between the hero and heroine wasn't what you would find in, you know, a romance novel, not stuff that

just because he's a, he's a man or he hasn't dealt with his own issues, but it's always like, oh, he's white and she's black. How will they ever get along? And it's like, that was not our issue. You know, if we had issue our different races wasn't. And I just wanted to sort of see our relationship, again, in the books that I loved the most. And so, I mean, it was a conscious effort. I was like, okay, so this is the relationship that I'm in. This is what I'd like to see. Then maybe I need to write what it is that I want to see. And so that's why I wrote interracial. Early on, it was a problem. I think people were like, well, how is this going to work? And is that realistic? And if you do a series, does that mean that all the white men are only going to, you know, end up with all the black women? I'm like, well, I guess that's what's going to happen because that is what I write. You know? And, and it, I guess sort of going back to my women's studies roots, sort of like the personal is the political. And so again, I didn't set out to be political or to say like I'm only writing interracial for some grand reason or to sell books or whatever. I literally wanted to write the stories that I was looking to read.

Bianca:

You're listening to the Book Club Girl podcast, where our guest this week is Tracey Livesay whose book *Like Lovers Do* is out now. You can read more about Tracey's books at bookclubgirl.com.

Tavia:

Coming up on the Book Club Girl podcast. We ask Tracey about her affinity literary character, and you're going to love this answer. So stick around

Bianca:

This episode of the Book Club Girl podcast is brought to you by *The Change* by Kirsten Miller, a revenge fantasy about three women who in the midst of a midlife crisis take on unexpected powers. *The Change* by Kirsten is out now.

Bianca:

Tracey, one of my favorite scenes in the book is also one of the most horrifying. I think I'm clearly talking about the scene where Nic accidentally texts Ben, instead of somebody else. It's just, I was so horrified, but I loved it so much. All the drama. So good. So I've got to ask you, has something like that ever happened to you and what were your feelings while writing that scene?

Tracey Livesay:

That's so crazy. Uh, well first let me say, I have been, um, married to my husband for over 20 years. So if anything happens, it's safe. Um, but I, I needed of course to have a way for them to, they're obviously aware that each other's attractive, but they have made the choice that this friendship that we have built is more important than acting on some attraction that might not work out. And we don't want to risk that. And so when you have friends like that, you have to find a way to throw that attraction back up. You know, you have to make it sort of pressing so we can get to the good stuff. And so while that particular thing hasn't happened to me, you know, I do text a lot, I'm on my phone a lot, and sometimes, you know, I'll want to send a text to my husband. And since we are the people who text each other the most, we're usually at the top of the queue. So I'll just open my text app and just start texting and send it and think I'm sending it to him and I'm actually sending it to another friend or something like that. That has happened quite a bit to me. And so I thought it's very possible that, you know, that could have happened to Nic as well. And that's a good way to sort of, you know, to, to, to sort of put it in his face. <laugh>

Tavia:

Oh my God, he was out the door. He was, like I'm there!

Tracey Livesay:

He was! "You want? At home? OK. Yeah. Yeah. Good. You know, <laugh>, I mean, I can make it there."

Tavia:

So in talking about Nic and her mistake, her texting mistake, air quotes, you know, I have, I have so much respect for her. I mean, she is this accomplished orthopedic surgeon. She, it puts her in this rarified air, not only within the medical profession, but also within her race and gender. And I, I have to know, were you inspired by a real person? And if so, can I meet her? <laugh>

Tracey Livesay:

Well, you, you are. Thank you. No... <laugh>, I would say there is, um, a, a doctor in my, um, friend group. Um, so she's a little bit of her, uh, and she's a little bit of me and then she's just a little bit of just creation. But it was one of the things that I know about my friend. She's not an orthopedic surgeon, but I know sort of what some of the things she had to go through, you know, going through her education. And even now it's so funny, we were talking maybe a few months ago and it, I don't know why it, it dawned, when she was like, I asked her and she answered it and she's like, you know what? I've been a doctor for over 20 years. And I was like, what, wait a minute, what <laugh> um, I was like, oh yes, you have. That makes total sense because you know, of the age we are and everything that's been going on. Um, I just see her as my friend, but, you know, I'm aware of sort of what she's had to you, you know, the, the things she's had to deal with, uh, the, the constant slights that she's had to sort of, um, to move through, just to help people, just to do her job. Having people question, uh, whether she's qualified or when she comes into the room saying that, you know, they'll wait for the real doctor to come in, you know, those sorts of things just because she, to, to help them. That's just all she's ever wanted to do. Um, and so it, you know, occurred to me that just at that level, you have to be someone who really wants to do this job. Um, and then you add into that, the field that she went into. And I, and I specifically wanted Nic to be in that type of field where, um, you know, where there were very few people who looked like her, um, not only being Black, but being a woman, um. I specifically was looking for field like orthopedics, because I wanted that to be a sort of proxy also, for you to see how tough she is, is, and how driven she is, um, how important her job is for her. Because it makes everything that follows, that she does afterwards -- you understand it.

Tavia:

A hundred percent. I totally understood Nic's motivations. And what can you tell us about *American Royalty* and when is it coming out, for our listeners?

Tracey Livesay:

Okay. So *American Royalty* is coming out June 28th. I am so excited. Um, as a side note, it is, so it is an entirely new series, but I want everyone to know because I have been asked this so often I am still writing the girls' trip series. The last two girls trip books are coming. Um, but <laugh>, uh, you know, this series is sort of just coming in. Just, it, it, it just, it had to, it wanted to come out now. Um, it's just making its, its presence known. So *American Royalty*, um, is the story of an American rapper who goes across the pond to perform in a tribute concert. And she meets and falls in love with a member of the British Royal family. That's, that's easy. <laugh> It's a quick way to describe it. I, that it's being marketed as sort of like, you know, uh, Harry and Meghan, and there are some obvious sort of, uh, ties to Harry and Meghan, but, uh, Dani is not like Meghan, uh, in any way. Um, she is an American rapper think sort of Megan thee Stallion mixed with a little bit of Cardi B. Um, yeah. And <laugh> and uh, and Prince Jameson, um, he, yeah, he's the Queen's grandson, but he's, he's a, he's a reclusive, a reluctant Royal. He does not want to be in the spotlight at all. He's like a, a grumpy professor and he is not happy to have this, you know, sexy rapper sort of thrown, uh, <laugh> thrown onto his lap. So, you know, I'll just leave it at that.

Tavia:

My God, that sounds amazing.

Bianca:

Tracey, we have one final question for you. So at every episode we ask our guests, if you could be character from any novel, who would you be?

Tracey Livesay:

That is so hard. Um, it really is. It's hard. Okay. I'm going to, I'm going to go Jane Austin, but I'm not going to go Lizzy. I know people probably go Lizzy, I'm not going to go Lizzy. I'm going to go, Emma, I, and the reason I'm going to go Emma is because I am very bossy. I do believe that I know what is right for everyone <laugh> and as a romance author, I do feel like I could help people with their romantic problems. And so, I mean, in Emma, Woodhouse just seems that's everything. That's, that's all encompassing. And so if I could do that and then end up with a really, you know, hot friend of the family.

Bianca:

That's what Sally Thorne said. Yes. I kind of love it though. I, I, you know, when we were going to ask this question, I didn't even think of Emma as being an option, but now two authors have said it and I'm like, yeah, I want to be Emma. Like, hell yeah.

Tavia:

I have to, I have to go reread that book now. I'm like, I didn't really remember her being so amazing.

Tracey Livesay:

Well, you know, I think it, I think it depends on how you look, you know, you look at her, I mean, she can be a little selfish and self-involved. I mean, yes. And we, we have those sides to us as well, but um, oh, I can't believe that. That just so... Hey, Sally. High five. Yeah. <laugh>

Tavia:

Tracey. It has been so awesome having you on the show. I really enjoyed talking to you about your book. I just, I can't remember having laughed as much in an interview in so long. My cheeks hurt. Thank you so much for joining us, Tracey.

Tracey Livesay:

Thank you, guys, for having me. I had a blast. I've been looking forward to this. So thank you so much.

Tavia:

Yay.

Tavia:

That was Tracey Livesay, whose book *Like Lovers Do* is out now. To find out more about *Like Lovers Do* and Tracy's other works, head to bookclubgirl.com/podcast, where you can also find links to everything mentioned in this episode.

Tavia:

Like what you heard? And we know you did... Subscribe on iTunes, Spotify, Stitcher, wherever you get your podcasts. And while you're out there, give us a reading and please leave a review. Another way that you can help spread the word about the Book Club Girl podcast is tell a friend. I know you've got other book lovers in your life. It really helps others to find us.

Bianca:

You'll hear from us again next week, where we'll be speaking with Vanessa Riley, author of the remarkable historical novel *Island Queen*. 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.

Tavia:

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 @bookclubgirl. You can also leave us a voicemail. Yes, we do listen to our messages. Our number is 2 1 2 2 0 7 7 3 3 6. And your voicemail or email could very well end up being read on the show.

Bianca:

Before we go. We'd like to thank Caroline Kwash of the Hangar Studios who produced today's episode. Rich Cerbini and Alia Jackson, our excellent engineers at Hangar Studios.

Tavia:

Until next time I'm Tavia.

Bianca:

And I'm Bianca.

Tavia:

Happy reading!