

## Books Cubed: Episode 4 Transcript

19:14

Melissa:

Good adventures everybody! Welcome to episode 4 of Books Cubed. Today I have a reading. I'm going to be reading from some of my work. First, before I get to that, I wanted to mention comments. I had one comment from last week's episode from Lisa:

“Hey great vlog. He did a really effective job of explaining what we should think. We should feel something. I think he really did..

(He did! She's talking about Todd, who I talked to last week about poetry).

I often gauge whether I thought a poem was good on whether I felt something but thought I was doing it wrong. I really enjoy Mary Oliver. Her poem The Journey is one of my favorites. Billy Collins is one who'll make you laugh! Being a writer, I think you'd enjoy

(a word I can't pronounce, because I can't read it It's too far away, but it's in last week's show notes.)

Good stuff!

Also, performance poet, Terry Molly, has some really good ones - especially the What Teachers Make, and totally, like, whatever. You know, check them out.”

And, I did check him out, and he has a funny poem called The Importance of Proofreading, which is really funny for a writer and, of course, you know everything's wrong about it.

I recommend... I'm gonna put a link in the show notes, so you can check him out and read something. He's got several poems online that you can read - but I'm not gonna read from them because they're his poems.

What have I been doing? Um, writing. I am trying to get How to Square Your Grouper out, so it's ready when I said it was gonna be ready. We'll see! I'll be writing after I finish getting this all done. I'll be heading off to the coffee house to do some work... see if I can get a couple chapters knocked out today . Normally I would have started my day with a run. We are training for a half marathon in November. My friend Laura and I are gonna meet up finally. She did the - if you have a paperback copy or even the e copy... it's in there too - of How to Sex Your Snake. Laura did the map on the inside. I know she's done some other stuff for me and- I'm so sorry Laura my mind is a mess -but she's great. She was a great artist so, if you need an artist, I'll put a link to her in the show notes.

Let's see... shin splints. shin splints, shin splints. I've got shin splints so I haven't been able to run, which is making me really nervous because like I said we've got a run in Cape Canaveral in November and I'm doing research for book three in the June Nash series, which takes place around Cape Canaveral and I need to be there. I need to do some research and I need to run the race. Can't do that too. I'm running a marathon in January and I missed it last year, because I got my cochlear implant and then I got the flu. I forget which one happened first; but anyway, I don't want to make up for that. So far I've only done one marathon and I really want to start adding some hash marks to my imagined tattoo that I have somewhere on me. I'm considering getting a 26.2 tattoo and then just putting a little hashtag every time I do a marathon. We'll see. I have one tattoo on my back but I don't know, I might get another one. We'll see. Anyway so the shin splints are annoying me. We talked about I'm gonna put a link to Taylor and I told you the comments.

I've got a bit of reading that I'm gonna do for you. It's Chapter One, It's a little bit long, so I hope you enjoy it. It is from a book that'll be a little bit different than the June Nash series- there's a little bit of cursing in it, so you know if you're somewhere where, it's like two curse words toward the end.

If you're somewhere where it's not safe for work, don't play it out loud. Put it in your ears or something. I guess that's about it and so we'll go right to that.

The short redhead slouched against a chain-link fence that ran the length of the park and watched as bits of Americana passed under the harsh orange glow of the street lamps. Kids racing bikes. Dogs tugging leashes, out for the last sniffs of the night. Couples pushing strollers, eager to lull their little ones to sleep. The image of little ones being tucked into cribs made her yawn. She yanked off her ball cap, scratched vigorously at the pixie cut she'd been talked into, and tried to will herself back into surveillance mode.

It was an unseasonably warm September evening and while her jeans and tan antelope jacket were tolerable, she was regretting her choice of footwear. The low-heeled hiking boots were comfy but they left her with sweaty feet and an itchy left leg- though that was more from the gun strapped to her calf than the boot. She bounced herself off the fence and crouched down to adjust her ankle holster. The Beretta Picot 380 didn't weigh much. Less than a pound with a full magazine; but the Velcro was old - a hand-me-down from her first partner and it was losing its will to live. The holster had spent most of the night loose at her ankle, bouncing against the lip in her boot. While she used one hand to steady the pocket holding her gun, the other ripped the Velcro - pulled it taut and then pressed it back into place. Tested it with a tug. Would hold for now.

A shoulder holster would have been more comfortable; but the fear of shooting herself in the bicep while drawing her weapon kept the Beretta on her ankle

Before she dropped the leg of her boot cut jeans back into place, she checked to see if the photo was still tucked behind her gun. It was. She wiggled it free and hooked two fingers into a link in the fence to hoist herself up.

The couple in the photo were older - mid sixties at least. The woman held a scruffy brown little dog on her lap and she and the man looked happy. Better times. The redhead yanked the walkie-talkie off the waistband of her jeans and pressed the talk button:

Where is she? Burst of static came back at her.

Hang on, Finley. Her partner, Walter, sounded bored

In the bedroom watching TV with her mum.  
Where are you?

End of the block by the ball field.

More static. You don't by chance consider this a big fat waste of our time do you?

Finley tapped a fingernail against the edge of the walkie-talkie. Walter could be a real pain in the ass.

When her mentor, Jack, had skipped town in the middle of the night leaving the agency in her hands, she'd been fine working alone. Being a private eye was really all about research and that was something she could do all by herself. Lots of time at the computer. Lots of time sifting through record halls and archives. Lots of times staying in a parked car, ready to snap pictures of the Spouse of the Week doing the nasty with the wrong partner. All you needed was patience.

Doesn't matter what I think she said, it's what the client thinks.

When ya coming back? Walter was not a patient man, or even a private detective. He was a writer. A romance writer. He churned out those thin volumes you see at the grocery store – with the bare chested guy on the cover, his beefy arms wrapped around a damsel In distress.

No, the writer was her unofficial partner because he was Zelda's brother and she loved Zelda.

Less than a week after Finley had become the sole owner of the agency, Walter had shown up with a question. Research for a new book. A morning had turned into a day, a week into a month, and two years later he was still there camped out at Jack's old desk, tapping away at the computer when he wasn't peppering her with questions about P.I procedures. And as far as she knew, he still hadn't written a story about a private detective.

She finally decided that as long as he was gonna be around, she might as well put him to use. Let him answer phones, Take care of the mail. Help her be in two places at once - like tonight. She lifted the walkie-talkie to her lips.

I'm gonna do [?] another pass and we can trade out.  
Walter was gonna have to try to be patient.

So, like, five or ten minutes more?

He's Zelda's brother she reminded herself, and you love Zelda.

Be more like 20. Pretend you're protecting the heroine from one of your books - the time will fly.

On the other side of the packed neighborhood park ,Walter wasn't sure he could make that work. Stretched out in the bed of his pickup truck, his back against the cab window, he replaced the walkie talkie with a pair of binoculars and involuntarily shivered as the little old lady came back into view. A woman like her would never be the heroine in one of

his books, though perhaps this was an untapped market potential? Romances featuring senior citizens.

He spun the focus wheel on the binoculars. Everything melted into soft blobs of color before sharpening back into little old lady. No. There were wrinkles in that landscape. That was a lot of wrinkles in that landscape - it would never work. He dropped the binoculars in his lap and rubbed his eyes. Moments like this almost made him regret his decision to partner up with his sister's girlfriend. Almost; but with Jack gone, Finley was on her own. Who knew what sort of trouble she'd get herself into? Possibilities were endless.

Walter raised the binoculars again and gave the room he was watching another quick peek. The old lady had settled down into bed. Thank goodness he'd missed any change of clothes and was currently snuggling the little brown dog. They weren't going anywhere anytime soon. Better to keep an eye on the house itself. The binoculars dropped back into his lap and he rubbed his eyes again. He really needed to clear his head and think about something else for a bit.

As he scanned the row of cracker box houses that lined the old lady's street, something about the trees caught his eye. The old-growth cottonwoods that dwarfed the little house had begun to shake, as if a strong wind picked up out of the south. Flecks of silver caught his eye. Something was moving through the trees, leaves shifting, branches shaking. What the Hell?

As he scanned the tree line, a light flicked on at the third house on the left and a girl, maybe 10, stepped out into the yard. The movement in the trees shifted and Walter felt the hair on the back of his neck stand on end. It was headed her way! He drew himself up on his knees and screamed RUN! He got out the word as a massive creature crashed to the cottonwoods moving on four legs.

It galloped toward the girl, its thick body covered in silver scales, its mouth open rammed full of glistening teeth. A throaty roar filled the night as it closed in on the terrified child...

Nah. Walter shook away the image and the street was quiet once again. The tall cottonwoods holding their ground, the air still. The house is dark, the yard is empty.

Horror wasn't something he wanted to write. Yeah, it paid great and he knew a lot of authors who made a living off the 30 or so ebooks they published every year; but no, he just wasn't a fan. Best to stick to his volumes of love.

Think about something else. When was the last time his agent had called? His new book was supposed to be out and he still hadn't gotten a copy and he really wanted to see it. They'd used a new photo on the back cover. He'd seen a proof; but he wasn't sure it conveyed the real him. Aloof. Man-about-town, yet tender when it came to the lady's sensibilities.

I think it's perfect. The voice purred in his ear and sent vibrations down his spine... ah, Angelina.

He grinned at the brunette leaning into the bed of his pickup, a book clutched in her hands. There was a pout on her tasty red lips and her thick black hair hung loose and long, the curls hiding most of the pearl buttons that strained to hold her red silk blouse together. Ah, Angelina. She was one of his favorite creations. She leaned in a bit closer, her lips parting, eager to take on his. Hang on. Walter raised a hand and she stopped short. Doesn't quite work. Maybe... he fingered the blouse. Hmm. Maybe lighter and thinner fabric. In his mind's eye, the red dissolved into a sheer white and he nodded, satisfied.

Angelina swung a leather-clad leg over the gate and dropped onto the blanket beside him. She set the book on her lap and traced the outline of the small photo near the bottom of the back cover.

I love this picture of you.

Walter nodded. I like it too. And he did. He'd worn a blue cable knit sweater, a fresh dose of spray-on tan, and a favorite tweed cap that covered a hairline that had been receding since his 16th birthday. At the last minute, he'd let the photographer tuck a pipe into the corner of his mouth, you know, giving him a real air of authenticity. I love what it says to me – tender, yet a man of action.

Angelina leaned close enough to brush her soft lips against his cheek. Which book is that? Walter wanted to flip the corner over but his right wrist was now cuffed to one of the tie-down loops in the bed of the truck. He tugged on the restraint, feeling the cold steel against his wrist, hearing the grind of metal against metal and another shiver worked its way down his spine. He always thought he knew how the evening was going to progress whenever Angelina materialized. He was always pleasantly surprised. She turned the book over. It's The Moonswept Stranger, she purred. Of course. It was the perfect choice for a dull night of surveillance. Page 73 to 75...well, most of The Moonswept Stranger would have been perfect. He shook his head. There's no time for 73 to 75. He had only about 20 minutes. Pages 73 to 75 would take least an hour, when done, correctly.

Angelina ripped open her shirt. Pearl buttons flew in every direction, freeing cleavage stuffed in a lacy ivory corset. Just page 75 then.

20 minutes later, Finley was only halfway through her last circuit of the park. More bikes. More strollers. More dogs. Eventually, she'd been forced to stand to one side, simply scanning faces as they went by and now her

neck was sore. Sticking a corner of the photo between her teeth, she slipped two fingers into a link in the fence to steady herself and then pressed her chin to her chest 'til the back of her neck burned from the stretch. Then she closed her eyes and rolled her head in a circle. Her neck popped and cracked and she moaned a little as the muscles began to unwind. Tomorrow she was getting a massage and charging the client. She took the photo out of her mouth and wiped the wet edges on her sleeve. Better get back to it. Slipping into an empty bit of sidewalk, she sidestepped an arthritic-looking Dalmatian and his equally arthritic owner, dropped onto the street and was almost run over by a bicycle as it zig-zagged around a couple of rollerbladers. Spinning out of the way, she slammed into a guy who had chosen that exact moment to step off the sidewalk. The photo went flying and she wound up face-first in the gutter.

Are you okay? Somebody pulled her to her feet. Not the guy who knocked her over, of course, but the guy from the photo which he was now holding. Oh well. Hi Gary, she said. He wrinkled up his face in recognition. Finley Wade.

How you doin? she asked .He nodded, scrunched up his mouth like he was gonna reply, sucked in a breath and then took off.

Finley propped a foot on the edge of the curb and watched him jog away. He wasn't very fast. The beer belly told her he was wasn't into exercise and the wheezing signaled a multipack a day habit and that was all good. She wasn't in the mood to chase him. When he reached the T intersection at the end of the road, he stumbled to a halt, hunched over to catch his breath. Go right, she whispered to herself. If he went right, she could ignore him advise the client to regroup. Go right, she whispered again. He went left. Fuck. She was gonna have to chase him .

Okay so I hope you liked it. It's a little bit different than June Nash like I said; but I really had a fun time writing it and the book is about half done. So I don't know... let me know if you want to hear more. That's it for this week.

I'm not sure what I have next week. I've got four or five shows that are done or partially done, so I'll just have to look and see which one I've scheduled for next week. It really should be more organized, huh?

So, leave a comment Let me know what you think of the show. Let me know your favorite books. Your favorite poets. We talked about poetry last week. Write a Haiku for me. They're really short. It's, what? Five seven five syllables? Come on, leave one in the comments and I will be back next week. Oh, I think I've got theme music that we'll have for the show next week. They're recording it, I think, this week, so I'm excited to premiere that. And I think there'll be some photos from the recording session. I have to figure out how to get the monitor reflection out of my eyeglasses. That's kind of annoying isn't it? But if you're listening to this, then I guess you don't have to see me, so that's good, I suppose.

I will see you next week. Leave a comment. Subscribe. Tell your friends and until then, go read a good book!