

DUST JACKETS

Conversations with Authors



Transcript for Interview with Fabienne Marsh

(upbeat music for 10 seconds)

Maggie Lynch 0:14

Welcome to the very first dust jackets conversations with writer's broadcast. I've been thinking about doing this for three years. It took a pandemic and me learning how to do some basic video editing to get it off the ground. And there's no better way to start this than with our first guest, Fabienne Marsh. She's someone who writes books for those who love stories of real-life experiences. And they're amplified just enough to make the fiction so real that you're sure you've met those characters in your own life. She's a fabulous writer, and very new to me.

I first met her about four to five months ago through the Authors Guild. When her last release, *Juliette, Rising* came out, I wasn't really sure I wanted to read it. After all, it's literary fiction. And honestly, I'm primarily a genre writer, and reader. But, boy am I glad I did. She made me laugh, cry; and I wish I could master the turns of phrase and characterization she puts seamlessly into her books.

On top of that, she will be a forever friend of this broadcast, because she's the one who suggested the name *Dust Jackets*. I was brainstorming mostly boring names. And knowing her background with film and documentaries, I asked for her feedback. She gave me several ideas, and I loved *Dust Jackets* immediately. So thank you, Fabienne, for that.

Let me just give you a little background. I'm going to read from her author bio. Fabienne Marsh is the author of four novels and numerous works of non-fiction. Her film credits have appeared on dozens of documentary films and she has taught writing at both Johns Hopkins University and the University of Minnesota.

Marsh grew up in Edgemont, New York, the daughter of a French mother and a father of Irish-English descent. At Williams College, she studied with John Gardner and took a double major in English and political science. After a five-year stint with the documentary unit at ABC News, during which she enrolled in the Columbia University Writer's Program under a Woolrich Fellowship, Marsh won a journalism fellowship and studied international relations at The London School of Economics. Upon her return to the States, Marsh worked on television documentaries, while publishing her critically-acclaimed novels, *Long Distances* and *The Moralist of the Alphabet Streets*, followed by her third novel, *Single, White, Cave Man*.

Marsh has served as a writer-consultant for Nickelodeon, HBO, Turner Broadcasting and Public Broadcasting (WNET and WETA). Her lighter works of non-fiction include *Dave'sWorld*, with co-author Michael Cader about David Letterman, and the coffee-table book, *Saturday Night Live: The First Twenty Years*, for which Marsh interviewed Candice Bergen, Steve Martin, Chris Rock, and other cast members.

Marsh's freelance articles have appeared in The New York Times, the Chicago Tribune, The Economist, the International Herald Tribune, Southbay magazine and Poetry Review (London). Her radio essays aired on MPR's "Marketplace" and WHY? Marsh has taught literature and creative writing at Loyola (Baltimore) and for three years, she served as the Journalism Advisor for the Chadwick School in California.

She is currently living in the South Bay of Los Angeles and has recently completed her fourth novel, *Juliettete, Rising*.

Well, that's quite the bio. And with that kind of experience, no wonder you write such amazing books. What I'd like to do is to get started talking about two new books you release, *Juliette*

Rising was released a little over a month ago, I think in December; and I understand there's an audio book almost ready to be released. Is that right?

Fabienne Marsh 4:16

Yes, narrated by Hope Newhouse, the incomparable narrator who happens to live in Paris.

Maggie Lynch 4:23

Oh, wonderful. Well, she certainly can pronounce all the French words you have then. And your second book, *Single, White Cave Man*, which is a second edition, was released just a couple of days ago.

In both of these books, the thing that really impressed me is your characters, and they're very true to life idiosyncrasies along with your underlying wit for observation. In my experience, most writers flesh out their protagonists really well. And maybe one or two other leading characters in a novel. But what impressed me about both of these books is that you make every character encountered unique and memorable.

For those who haven't read this book, I'd love to have you read something from *Juliette, Rising*. But I'll just kind of summarize it from the blurb and then in the show notes, we'll have the full blurb and a link to the book. So, to summarize, Juliette is a New Yorker transplanted to Portland, Oregon for a teaching job. And, during the book, she journeys through single parenthood, orphanhood, widowhood, new love, neurotic parents, beloved students, and a life altering bereavement group. In other words, real life with a good deal of baggage.

So, I think you have a passage prepared, Fabienne. Would you mind reading that?

Fabienne Marsh 5:47

Yeah, there were two we were thinking about, um, I was thinking of reading the setup passage from the beginning. That includes her best friend, Pat. It also has a theme that it is very common to me because I lived in New York City for 17 years, and lived in Oregon for two years. So, the east west thing is absolutely huge. There are many passages about that, but this also encapsulates parts of the plot.

(Reading from book)

I moved to Oregon after the father of my children blew up our brownstone on West 97th Street in New York City. I had no doubt the move would be better for our children, though I worried they would never have a normal childhood.

Two years later, I confess to pining for some of the very things that drove me West. People out here are so protein-powder, low-carb healthy and laid back that I miss my wine-swiggling, cigarette-sneaking, bipolar friends in New York.

Today, Pat called to tell me that *The New York Times* had an article about a bereavement group she wants me to attend. "They're doing very interesting work," she said.

Pat claims to have jurisdiction over my grieving process. According to Pat, who is in mourning herself, I am not grieving properly. I never hit Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance at either the correct stages or at the right time. And forget about experiencing them in the proper order, assuming I experience them *at all*.

"I think the Bereavers are in your neck of the woods," she says.

"Which neck would that be?" I ask.

"Tryon Creek State Park. Isn't that near Portland?"

I am always giving Pat geography lessons, as I do for all New Yorkers. I begin with Lewis and Clark, The Louisiana Territory, and Thomas Jefferson. In the Pacific Northwest, the expedition's goal was to learn where the continent ended. When I get carried away about Lewis's noble dog, Seaman, Sacagawea, and the difficult winter at Fort Clatsop, Pat always interrupts.

"I really don't give a rat's ass about the Indians or the explorers."

So I ask her what she does care about.

"Everybody's dying," she says.

And here we go again. Because what Pat says is true. Four years ago, Pat's husband died of ALS. One year later, she lost her mother to breast cancer and three months ago, her Pomeranian rescue died of congestive heart failure.

Maggie Lynch 8:13

Wow. Thank you for reading that.

Fabienne Marsh 8:14

You're welcome.

Maggie Lynch 8:14

I'm amazed by how you combine grief as well as laughter. Since I've lived on both coasts, myself, I really identified with the part about the real differences in the cultures. What made you decide to write a book that dealt primarily with bereavement, but you know, show these different sides of it?

Fabienne Marsh 8:47

That's a good question. The semi-autobiographical part of it is that I was suffering myself very much so. So, on the micro level, it's...I was experiencing a lot of grief. I did lose three members of my family within 12 months. I did lose my marriage during that period, and I was dislocated to another state. So, all of those are supposed to be enough for somebody to be dead or on Oprah. Oprah didn't invite me, so I had to write a book.

I think what's going on is that grief is always current. Right now, in the time we're living, it's especially current. I think we're in a state of collective mourning now, with 400,000 plus losses due to COVID. And mounting. So, this has always been a subject I wanted to deal with. I didn't know I would be dealing with it so much personally.

And this ties into the bereavement group. Because every one of those characters represents something also, in our society. I deliberately chose characters because—I think you were surprised when I told you this in the green room—I've never been in a bereavement group. But I picked people that I could empathize with their losses, again, on a personal level; but who also represent epidemics in our culture, not a pandemic, but an epidemic.

One character, his partner committed suicide. Another character has lost a daughter due to an overdose. That Heroin overdose represents, for me, a crisis. The opioid crisis.

There was one that I feel very close to also—because my father served in the military, and so did my six uncles in World War Two—another character in the bereavement group lost a military family member. There's also a loss of a husband.

And the one that, even when I was writing it, really ripped me apart was the loss of a child. And that's the leader of the group, Brenda, who was watching when the school bus hit her child. And I just can't even imagine...I mean, I made that up; but it's because it was so horrific.

And the same applies in terms of a kind of metaphor, the explosion in the very beginning. That's a true explosion. That really happened in New York City. I didn't live there at the time, but a friend of mine from Williams College remembers visiting the crater left by the explosion in New York City, with her uncle. And to me, that became, again, and it's parallel to the grief...I said to myself, how did this family pick up the pieces after that? How did they pick up the pieces, and that became what in film we would call an inciting incident, which is something that happens in the first few pages of the script and in the film's first few minutes.

Fabienne Marsh 12:42

That's what starts to unravel this subsequent plot. That said, I had no idea what I was going to do with it; and it became very difficult. This is probably the most difficult book I've ever written. But that character thing, and the collective mourning, we're going through now, the bereavement group and all that.

I'm getting a lot of feedback from people who never read books like this, for people who are straight nonfiction readers or straight genre readers, that there is something that I'm happy

that they're relating to because I wrote this book to help other people. I hope that answers your question.

Maggie Lynch 13:22

It does. And you actually anticipated another question, which was that it reads like a memoir to me, you know. I remember when I was first reading it, I kept thinking: Oh, this must really be a memoir disguised as fiction.

Fabienne Marsh 13:37

We can talk about that a little bit, because people like to know the true, not true thing. So, the true part is there was an explosion, but it's metaphorical as well as true that it happened. The other part is that in my personal life I'm a very private person. It took me 15 years to write this book because I wanted my children to be older. I wanted them to be adult children. I didn't want someone that I was involved with to be present. So, I killed him off stage, so to speak. So, I created that exposure so there couldn't be any discussion of that person seeing himself in this case, in the book.

I had to put things in place to protect my privacy, and the privacy of people I love very much. And, in some cases, I altered what happened to them in a very benevolent way. That did not occur in real life, because your characters can't be cartoons. You have to empathize with each and every one of them. And they also have to have an arc to them. They have to change. Otherwise, it's just flatlining. It's boring. Nobody wants to...they want to see some evolution. It's kind of a redemption in life, which four characters experience in the book.

But the true not true stuff? Um, it is absolutely as I said, semi-autobiographical. I never used to admit that stuff when I was younger, but now I'm an old broad. So, I'm like tough.

It was absolutely the case that when I lived in Oregon, not just Oregon, I kind of had a forced march So I also lived in Minnesota. These two are very homogenous states. And the story about the kids being mixed race and all that stuff. I experienced a lot of that, you know. They thought I was a nanny or something when we'd go through the TSA in Minnesota...when they said they weren't racial profiling. But they were. We always got pulled over. In fact, that's a scene in the book at the airport. But [in the book] they didn't get pulled over because of the kids. It's because of how Juliette was behaving when she suggested: "why don't you just throw in a free mammogram" because she was tired of being frisked. That wasn't because of the profiling issues.

It is very hard moving to places and getting the glue, especially if you're from the east coast. So, in Oregon and Minnesota in particular, I did deal with the topic of racism. In fact, there's one of the girls in Grace's class who they call the "magic white supremacist". She won't play

with people of color, which her mother denies and all that. So that's kind of a true thing or theme.

The characters are really kernels of people that I've sometimes met. I talk to people on planes. I remember once I couldn't be in the same row with the father of my children in real life. So, there were three guys sitting there. It was a long flight. One had his nose in a book. The other was watching a movie. There was like no conversation whatsoever [between the guys].

I was in a row with three women. By the end of the flight, one woman was crying talking about this and that, and I was empathizing with her and telling [my story]. She knew everything about my life by the end of the flight. It was just so funny. And at the end of the flight, I looked over to the guys and, as I said, Nothing. Whereas, we talked the entire flight.

So, it's funny, there is a character in this book that somebody asked me about because they love the line about the character in the book. I wish I could find it quickly. There was a woman, I think it was a book club in Memphis. And she said, I really love this line, it is so beautiful. There's a woman on a plane that Juliette is speaking with. And the woman is extremely empathetic. And she says: Sometimes life is something like a candle that, you know, snuffs out quickly, or, you know, it burns evenly. It's much better written in the book than I just said, but, um, that was a real woman.

It is amazing to me that you can get an entire profile of someone in a very concentrated way just by listening to them. And a lot of things spark my imagination that way. I fill them out to give them entire lives. And that happens a lot. Also, I am French and Irish. And if anybody knows anything about the French and cafes, you're always like, Oh, look at that guy. You know, get a load of this one. You know, you're just sitting there observing people, that's what you're doing. And the Irish are no different. And same with my Jewish friends. I mean, it's the same kind of humor. It's observational humor is what I wanted to say.

Maggie Lynch 19:12

Right. Well, that's that certainly explains it. I know that writers do observe a lot in their life. One of the things that you really have, that I don't, is you remember them.

Let's move on to your second book, *Single, White Cave Man*. That is really different from *Juliette, Rising*. They both have amazing covers.

Fabienne Marsh 19:39

(Holds up cover) This is a cover of *Juliette, Rising*. This is the iconic, they don't know the Oregon coast, but this is obviously haystack—the haystack rock at Cannon Beach.

Maggie Lynch 19:50

Right.

Fabienne Marsh 19:51

We asked the great digital artist, who lives in Serbia, to have the colors for the Day of the Dead in the kite, because eventually they go to Mexico to see how others cultures honor the dead.

But anyway, segueing to what you're talking about, (holds up a different cover) this is the cover for *Single, White Cave Man*, which is fun.

Maggie Lynch 20:15

Show them the back because the back is really interesting.

Fabienne Marsh 20:19

Well, we realized that this guy is on the internet, and he's a poor suburban guy, age 38. And he's looking for love. And it's really hard in suburbia. And I suddenly realized I was speaking to the digital artist, and I said: "you know, for sale signs in front of houses? He's selling himself. So, I said, "Can you figure out a way to put the bio on the For Sale sign?" Which he did; and it's just so much fun. Do you want me to read the bio?

Maggie Lynch 20:52

Yeah, that would be great.

Fabienne Marsh 20:54

Okay. Okay. So, on the sign it says: For sale, price reduction. Tall, dark, passionate hunter gatherer and first-generation Italian seeks feisty, comely, brainy woman to settle down and raise a family. First marriage ended after a dispute over my passion for both labs and golf. Which is why you see the minute man sculpture here. And he's holding a golf club. And there's a lab at his feet.

Maggie Lynch 21:28

Yes. It was really...it's just...it's a brilliant cover. And it's fun.

Fabienne Marsh 21:33

I'm an art freak. I mean, I'm a total art freak. So, for me, to have the ability to work with people like you, and to work with Hope, the amazing narrator. And to work with an amazing digital artist. that was not part of my experience. When I wasn't a hybrid publisher, by that, I mean, you invited me to be part of your wonderful imprint. So it's not, you know, self-publishing as most people do it. So as a result, I have input, and I'm not used to getting great covers. In the past, they were absolutely hideous and I was stuck with them. So, to me, it's much more interactive and fun to participate in the process; because it's all about process.

Maggie Lynch 22:18

And I agree with you about the covers. My first traditional contract, the first cover they gave me was so bad, that I said: "I'll pay you back the advance rather than take this cover and have it put out there in the world."

Fabienne Marsh 22:22

Oh, wow.

Maggie Lynch 22:24

You know, you're really not allowed to do that. But fortunately, they decided that they would take my feedback, and they did give me something else. I still didn't love it. But at least it wasn't as horrific as the first one. But covers are important. It is well, especially now, when most people look for books, even for print books, they're looking online. And the cover is what grabs their eye. And they make an immediate decision on whether to look further.

Fabienne Marsh 23:06

May I add? It's the same thing with an audio book. I started listening to audiobooks very recently. Because, you know, everybody's really isolated now, including myself. And my dog is not the best conversationalist. So, I started listening to audiobooks. And if the, you know, if you have somebody in your ear for eight or nine hours, you really have to feel that this is somebody you want to take a journey with.

Maggie Lynch 23:39

Yes.

Fabienne Marsh 23:39

So, when we were listening to narrators and basically auditioning them, it was really on that basis. And I think I think Hope sounds amazing. So, I'm very excited about that, too.

Maggie Lynch 23:55

Yeah, I haven't listened to the whole thing. But the few things I have, I do think she's amazing as well. Audio is really funny in that everyone has a different voice that they prefer. And I think authors especially are difficult to please. Because, when we write a book, I know when I write one, in my head I hear their voices. I could never personally produce them because I'm not an actress. But I expect it. So it's really hard because, when you pick a narrator, you're thinking: Why isn't he or she reading this the way I heard it in my head when I wrote it?

Fabienne Marsh 24:31

Right. But you know, you're raising another point which you brought up in the beginning that you thought my book kind of sounded like a memoir. Well, that was the instruction I gave Hope. I said read it as if it's a memoir. You want that kind of intimacy with somebody in your ear. I can tell you the audiobooks I stopped listening to, and they were great books maybe, but the intonation of the narrator can kill the book.

Maggie Lynch 25:03

Yes!

Fabienne Marsh 25:04

If it's the wrong narrator, even if it's a great book, it can just kill the book. So, we have a good pairing, I think.

Maggie Lynch 25:11

Well, let's continue with *Single, White Cave Man*. There's a passage we discussed in advance that we're going to read. And this is a passage—just to kind of set it up for people who are listening—where Rosso, who has tried online dating for the first time, he's...it's his first encounter with someone who calls herself California Girl, known to us as Phoebe. And the way that you've written this is really clever.

I remember this chat thing. I actually did online dating back in the day when I was in my mid 40s, after being married for 12 years and divorced. And whenever I read through this book, I said, "Oh, my God, that's exactly what it's like." You know, you're trying to figure out if someone that you've reached online, is real number one. Because they rarely give you a real picture. They rarely give you a real name. And you're trying to think is it safe. Is this guy, good? Should I meet him? Because you have no prior knowledge; and you have no friends that know any of them.

So, I love this passage, because you've put it with their initials before and then what they've said, as they type it along, and that was exactly how it was in the late 90s, which was when I was trying this out. So, I just want people to know that as we read it, we're not going to read those little JR: Hellos. We're just going to trade off. [in the transcript we did include the actual text for the reading]

Fabienne Marsh 26:47

So, I'd like to add that the book is set in the year 2000. So, the opening line is: Jim Rosso was anticipating a lonely millennium. So that's why he started his journey. Just let me know if you're going to also pick up the narration in addition because there are little things of narration in between

Maggie Lynch 27:09

Yes, I thought I did the narration because it's in Ross's point-of-view and I get to do the part of Rosso. [below is actual text from the book. Maggie read the JR lines and Fabienne read the P (Phoebe) lines]

Before leaving for the office, Rosso reached Phoebe, the California Girl, online. Since she was state-of-the art, Phoebe had included a photograph of herself. Rosso was far from repulsed.

JR: Hello.

P: Hello.

JR: Thanks for sending your bio.

P: You're welcome. Why didn't you request mine?

JR: I did.

P: Really?

JR: Yes. I was going to contact you, but your bio wasn't available. You've got some nice computer equipment.

P: It's my field. Can you send me a picture?

JR: I don't have one on file.

P: Do you have a scanner?

JR: Yes.

P: Scan yourself.

JR: What?

P: Put your face against the scanner and send. I want to see what you look like.

JR: Are you serious?

P: Yes.

Rosso pressed his face against the scanner.

P: You either need a new head or a new scanner.

JR: What happened?

P: I think you should try again.

JR: I feel like an idiot.

P: Much better. You're cute. I knew you would be. A lot of the guys say they're handsome and they're toads. One guy lied about his height.

JR: By how much?

P: Four inches.

JR: No!

P: Another said he had brown hair when he had no hair.

JR: C'mon.

P: The worst one had his ears done.

JR: Why?

P: They stuck out.

JR: A male bimbo.

P: No, he was smart. He just wasn't as spiritual as I am.

Rosso hesitated. He decided to give Phoebe the benefit of the doubt.

JR: What faith?

P: It's not a church or temple religion. I meditate every morning. Do you?

JR: No. Should I?

P: Everyone should. It's cool.

Rosso looked at her picture. She really was gorgeous.

JR: What isn't cool?

P: The Military.

JR: What do you mean The Military?

P: The Military Industrial Complex.

JR: What about it?

P: It's not cool.

JR: I'm a former Navy pilot.

P: Top Gun?

JR: Yeah.

P: That's very cool.

JR: Explain to me how The Military can't be cool when Top Gun can.
P: Because of the movie.
JR: I see. You're funny.
P: I wasn't trying to be.
JR: You weren't?
P: No.
JR: You're serious?
P: Yes.
JR: Are you reading any Eisenhower?
P: Who?
JR: The guy who coined the term military-industrial complex.
P: I saw *JFK*. That's where I heard it. Have you seen Oliver Stone's *JFK*?
JR: Yes.
P: It was a masterpiece.
JR: Did you really go to Brown?
P: Why?

Because you're dimmer than a forty-watt bulb! He told Phoebe that she was a sweet, beautiful woman, but that he did not want to waste her time. Then he signed off.

A few minutes later the message icon on his laptop started blinking.

I like smart men. That's why I called you. Some of the stupidest people I know went to Ivy League schools. I'm not stupid. Give me a chance.

Maggie Lynch 30:23

Wow, that was fun reading together. Thanks for that was you're good. So famous, quite the character in this first introduction. And she only gets more interesting as the book progresses. What's really refreshing to me about this book is that it's from the male point of view. I've read a lot of contemporary romance novels about dating, usually younger women, but some older women from the female point of view. Why did you decide to approach this from the male point of view?

Fabienne Marsh 31:12

They're human. Men, breaking news, men are human. They often want the same things that women want. This is a good guy. I like him.

There was kind of a ping pong between writing him as a narrator, and also having him respond to all these female bios of different women that I had to write. So this was, you know, understand that this was written about 20 years ago, and set 20 years ago. And this was way before Tinder or Match had taken off. So, it was very frustrating, because I felt that I was onto something that hadn't been done yet. So, for me, it's just such a great opportunity to bring it out now in a second edition, because it was so badly published—hideously published the first time. And this one becomes more of a classic story and a period piece. So, it's actually better that it came out now.

Maggie Lynch 32:30

Well, and I think, although the technology has changed, you know, that you can actually Zoom and see each other if you want to, that a lot of what you talk about in there is still really the case. That is you're still meeting people who are not necessarily who they portray themselves to be. You know, they make up backgrounds about their education, about their work. You know, we always see occasional news, things where, you know, a woman falls in love with someone that she met online. And then, after a couple years, she finds out he was nothing like how he portrayed himself. So, I think you really deal with a lot of that in your book, or at least, even though it's funny, it's also that kind of push and pull of how does someone figure out who they want to go with and what characteristics they like. And it's, it's really kind of crazy.

Fabienne Marsh 33:32

I think these journeys are at once funny and poignant.

Because he clearly doesn't want to be alone. And his ex-wife, Doris, is already with someone else. Doris, the bookbinder.

Maggie Lynch 33:53

Right, she ran off with a baseball guy or something.

Fabienne Marsh 33:56

Yeah, she ran off with a guy, you know, from the Boston White Sox. You cannot do that on the east coast. I mean, that is like the biggest thing you can't do. I don't know what the equivalent would be with Oregon. But that's, that's just, it doesn't happen that often. And I think that he is a very sympathetic character and I loved writing from a male perspective.

Maggie Lynch 34:29

You understand them. I thought it was very real to life.

Fabienne Marsh 34:39

I do. I think I do understand them. What's really funny is that you know how sometimes you can get customer reviews and all that stuff.? There was one guy in Brazil, and he's like: "I don't know how she does this. This is my life." I got the same thing from a customer on Amazon. He said, this is right. This is a thing. This is my life. And most of them were guys. That's what I loved about it because it's a real big deal. To have them respond, that means that I struck the right note.

Maggie Lynch 35:21

Yeah, I agree 100%. What's so interesting to me is that, although it's written from the male point of view, I would highly recommend it to all my women friends because he really is a good guy, but he is also definitely a guy. You know, he's not like some of the romance heroes that we read that think and feel more like women do. So, I really love that. And I think people

would just get a kick out of reading it. And even if you've never done online dating, just remembering back to when you were dating, and how confusing that was.

Fabienne Marsh 36:16

There are very few people in this day and age who haven't done online dating. It's so Shishi now. You can choose Gray-Date, Christian, I mean you can just find everything you need. You can be on Grinder.

Maggie Lynch 36:26

Yeah. You can be with the players or you can be with Christian folks. Yeah, it's really a very interesting and I still think it's also a scary place. I'm glad that I'm not doing it personally.

Fabienne Marsh 36:41

You know, you're raising a good point. I mean, everybody's exposed. You can just google and find out something about most everybody. But you really can't go deeper, unless you've got pretty good clearance. Right? You really can't just Google it. You really still have to have very good instincts, because it can be scary.

Maggie Lynch 37:03

Right. At least, and I don't know if they do this now, but if they do see each other before meeting, like via Zoom, at least you get some body language. And that was the scariest thing for me is that you didn't get any of that until you physically met. And then, you know, how can you figure it out over tea or even dinner? You know, if you want to continue seeing this person? Sometimes it's obvious you don't, but...

Fabienne Marsh 37:31

In *Single, White Cave Man*, a lot of the women take the lead.

Maggie Lynch 37:37

Yes, very much.

Fabienne Marsh 37:39

They we're pretty expressive in their desire for Rosso.

Maggie Lynch 37:47

Yes. And, in some ways, at least to me, I thought that that was important, because he was so lost that I didn't think he could take the lead in the beginning. You know, he had to kind of figure out what he really wanted and why and what he was willing to give up.

Fabienne Marsh 38:06

It's interesting, you just triggered a memory in the passage about that his best friend, Charles said. He met his wife, Rita, on Smartheart. That's how he [Rosso] thought if there's a woman like Rita, it's worth a shot. But Charles says: "Here's how it works." Charles is a surgeon, he says: "Here's how it works." He's talking to Roscoe his, buddy. He said: "If two people don't

know what they want, it's different from when one person knows exactly what he or she wants. That person will get the other person who does not know what he or she wants. That's the way it works. To keep people who don't know what they want, they can be molded a little bit more. Whereas if somebody is absolutely crazy about somebody and will persist..." So, he goes through this whole passage, which is actually a cool passage. He's very binary in his analysis, but somewhat true.

Maggie Lynch 39:11

Well, yeah. He is a character that I love to hate, but loved him still.

Well, I think we're kind of running out of time. And so we need to wind this down. So, I just have one last question. After people read these books, they're obviously going to want to know what else to read. So, if you could just kind of briefly describe your other two books, and do you have something planned that you're working on?

Fabienne Marsh 39:45

Sure. Okay. So, my first two books...First, I've done everything wrong in terms of being a commercial hit, because all my books are different. I've had different agents. I've had different publishers. You know, completely different. So, my first book is an epistolary novel, *Long Distances*, which sounds scary, but it's a novel of letters. And it's entirely in letters with different characters. It's about a couple and the husband's taking a sabbatical in London, while the wife is at home with the kids. And that is actually one of my favorites. It was very hard to construct, because it was kind of like play chess. Everything had to be in the right place, the responses and stuff. So that was a new one for me.

The Moralist of the Alphabet Street is a coming-of-age novel. Completely different. It's funny that the South loved it. I would get these reviews like: "Finally, a tar heel who can write." They were so funny, the reviews, because it was published by Algonquin Books in Chapel Hill. So the reviews related a lot to the southern take on the book. I get a kick out of them.

Then you know about the third, *Single, White Cave Man*; and the fourth was *Juliette, Rising*.

I don't know what I'm going to do next. I think I need to recover from going through all this stuff, which has been so very different. So very digital. The process was really, really nothing simple. I would think it was going to be a snap, but it isn't.

I would really like to write a children's book actually. I have a draft of one, but the issue with a children's book is that—unless you have a really name publisher who finds a really good illustrators it's hard. And that's a totally different thing. As you know I'm such an art freak, and have such an attention to detail that stuff—covers and the art. So, I really think it would be hard to give away that process now. They say it's all about the text, which it is, but in the children's books I see these days—you know I help children out with reading and stuff like that—there's a lot of spectacular illustrations.

Maggie Lynch 42:10

I think it depends on the age range you are talking about. Many picture books are written by primarily illustrators as the text is so little—or the text is contracted out. Whereas a Middle Grade book you could away with a nicely illustrated cover and then perhaps a single illustration per chapter.

Fabienne Marsh 43:01

Scholastic has some of the most amazing illustrators for every age. They're just amazing.

So, I was thinking about that. The honest answer is I'm open to other things. And I might go back to writing short pieces as well, which I do when I'm not writing a novel.

Maggie Lynch 43:49

Well, I really loved both of these books, and I exhort people listening to get their own copies. They are available both in print and ebook at all major online stores around the world. And, if you love print, you can get your local bookstore to order it for you if they're not already carrying it.

If you want to learn more about Fabienne and her books, or connect with her about visiting your book club or coming to your local store (more likely virtually unless you live in southern California). Go to fabienmarsh.com and I'll have a link in the show notes.

Thanks again, Fabienne, for being part of this very first ***Dust Jackets: Conversations with Authors*** broadcast.

(Music for 10 seconds)