



YA Café Podcast

Episode 2! I'm Not Missing

12 July 2018

- Danielle: [00:03](#) Welcome to the YA Cafe where we share conversations about books for teachers, readers, and caffeine addicts. Everywhere. On today's episode, we'll be talking about, I'm Not Missing by Carrie Fountain. Grab a Mug of your favorite beverage, friends, and let's talk books.
- Ad: [00:17](#) This podcast is made possible by Nouvelle ELA teaching resources. Find Secondary ELA resources to engage and inspire like an intro to Shakespeare Escape Room. NOUVELLE ELA, something new.
- Amanda: [00:31](#) Welcome y'all. As always, our first segment, will be spoiler-free and so you can stick around even if you haven't checked out the new novel yet. I'm Amanda Thrasher
- Amanda: [00:38](#) and I'm Danielle Hall, an 8th & 9th grade English teacher and I blog at teachnouvelle.com. In Carrie Fountain's I'm Not Missing, Miranda and Syd are best friends, brought even closer together by their shared trauma of being abandoned by their mothers. When Syd disappears and all Miranda finds is a note that says, 'I'm gone; I'm not missing,' Miranda is heartbroken that she's been left again. She wants answers, but Syd isn't responding to her texts. And as she grows closer to Nick Allison, she uncovers some truths that make her wonder how much she even knew her best friend. So I kept waiting for this book to turn into a thriller, but it's not...
- Amanda: [00:38](#) spoilers.
- Danielle: [01:19](#) Spoiler, it's not a thriller. It is straight up contemporary. It's character driven. I don't know. I guess because we've read so many thrillers. I was waiting for, you know, Syd to really be missing, but she's just gone.
- Amanda: [01:31](#) It's right there in the note. Dani. Yeah. I. So when I started reading this book, I could not help but notice (because we read them so close together) a lot of the parallels between this book and Monday's Not Coming, uh, that we talked about in an earlier episode. They're very different books though. The first few chapters feel very similar, but they definitely split. So if you have some hesitation going into this because you're like, oh, that sounds a lot like Monday's Not Coming, they're very different books.
- Danielle: [01:56](#) It's not Mondays Not Coming. This is more like Sisterhood of the Missing Pants.
- Amanda: [01:56](#) The Missing Pants.
- Danielle: [02:03](#) I don't know, it just, it feels like a little just contemporary - sacchrine at times, but not like thriller, you know?

- Amanda: [02:12](#) Yeah, I mean I think there was definitely darkness there too, particularly in the beginning and this is where it felt a lot like Monday's Not Coming where we're learning about Syd's lousy home life and her terrible father and stepmother. Those parts definitely felt echoey, but we get away from that pretty quickly. Like once Syd is gone, Miranda kind of pulls away from that and goes more into living her own life and coming to terms with her missing Sydney, not Sydney being missing.
- Danielle: [02:42](#) Right. I agree. And we have in this book, like her missing Sid is more just an extension, like they're best friends and all and she really misses Syd, but it's also an extension of her missing her mother. So this book deals a lot with grief and what that feels like and sit being gone is just like more grief that Miranda has. And I want to read a grief quote... Woo grief quote! "What I've learned from the two of them was that grief wasn't about someone being gone, it wasn't final like that. In fact it was the exact opposite. It was about wanting them so bad and knowing that your want had no end. There was no one to receive it, to stop it. It just kept going and going, seeking endlessly." And I thought that that was first of all really true. Like in my experience. And then I also think that we get a lot of the poet Carrie Fountain there, you know, like she was a poet before she was a novelist. So you definitely feel that in the prose.
- Amanda: [03:49](#) Yeah, I think you feel that a lot, not only through that paragraph but through the whole book. Like she definitely has a really good feel for imagery and rhythm in writing. Like there's a, there's definitely a rhythm throughout the writing that I really enjoyed reading it. It felt like the writing itself was deliberate and not just like a vehicle for plot.
- Danielle: [04:09](#) Yes, and I think that this book is very literary in that way. Like the writing alone is something that can lift you up even before you touch the characters and the plot. And we have a lot of great details in this book. One of the things that I thought was super fun and super funny was that Miranda has her mom's book, The Lives of Saints.
- Amanda: [04:35](#) I liked that a lot too, especially because it had like her mother's notes throughout it about like the martyrs and all of their escapades as martyrs murdering around.
- Danielle: [04:45](#) Right? So her mom like kind of interacts with the martyrs in this book. Like she's like, Oh, Joan headshaking, poor Joan and I just love like, you know, we don't see her mom, her mom is offscreen, right? And we never knew her mom. And so we get to know her mom slowly and it's obvious that Miranda is knowing her mom in this way to from the margin notes. Right. So we get a lot of her mom's humor and her mom's musings and her mom's relationship with religion.
- Amanda: [05:18](#) I think that the notes in the Lives of the Saints kind of went against what I thought that her mother's personality was. Like in the Lives of the Saints, she definitely likes engages with these stories and like both a spiritual way and an intellectual way, but then knowing what we know that her mother ultimately went and joined a cult. It seemed like a pretty big character disconnect to have

the same person who's like, "sorry, St Patrick. There were never any saints in Ireland" also running and joining this cult, leaving her daughter behind.

- Danielle: [05:47](#) Right. I mean I deeply read into this at this point, but I guess I saw the cult (which we find out about very quickly in the book) that her mom went and joined this cult, but I guess I saw that as the end of a religious identity struggle that started out fairly stable with the interactions that you're talking about Amanda, but then like there were some mental health issues that pushed her along to almost paranoia in her religion is how I read it,
- Amanda: [06:20](#) but we never saw any of that happening. Like even in Miranda's memory, we never saw like a line between, she's this very religious person who engages with our church. There's no like clear progression from her being like a loving mother. It's kind of like a big jump to go from like being a religious person to joining a cult.
- Danielle: [06:43](#) Right, I agree that it's a big jump and you know, she left when Miranda was eight and so, you know, Miranda is not necessarily remembering it clearly. Her Dad is not necessarily being forthcoming with information about what happened and so, you know, I did some reader reader shipping there and filled in some blanks with my own story and I think it makes sense. I think there was some sort of decline in mental health or stability, emotional stability that led her to go from like practicing Catholic to member of a cult.
- Amanda: [07:19](#) I look forward to reading your fanfiction on that.
- Danielle: [07:19](#) Okay. So I mentioned her awesome dad.
- Amanda: [07:25](#) Her Dad is pretty great.
- Danielle: [07:26](#) So her dad works for NASA and all of Miranda's life, she has known that her dad makes what she calls thingies. So like, oh, he's working on his NASA thingies and she just had this vision of him being like this sort of bumbling like third string NASA scientist who like made some thingies and she really like thought that NASA was humoring him by having him stay around.
- Amanda: [07:55](#) I mean, I don't, I don't necessarily agree with your assessment though. Like I think that she knew that her dad was doing like good work for NASA. I just don't think she realized what a big deal it was. I don't think she thought that he was like bad at his job or like
- Danielle: [08:07](#) I didn't say that she thought he was bad at his job. I just felt that she had the impression that if he were higher up in NASA or doing something of importance, he would be with more NASA people instead of telecommuting into a couple meetings a month or whatever. But her dad is a great character beyond his NASAness. Right off the top of my head, he does not let her blame herself for Syd's disappearance.
- Amanda: [08:39](#) Yeah. He's like on that, he's like, nope. This isn't because of you. Your mom wasn't because of you. He's just a, he's just really good. I liked him a lot.

- Danielle: [08:39](#) Me too.
- Amanda: [08:47](#) I also really liked that her dad was a very funny character. Uh, he had this one comment that I want to read. This is when they're talking about Miranda's possibilities for college and where her father may live when she leaves and she's joking that he's just trying to follow her to college and he goes, "Oh God, listen to me. This telescope has been in development since before you were born. It's basically the most sophisticated piece of technology the world has ever seen to date. I assure you, Miranda, the James Webb space telescope is not a ruse the National Aeronautics and Space Administration has cooked up so I can follow you to college."
- Danielle: [09:27](#) Yeah. I love that quote. And I loved how clear it became his love for her and wanting her to be, you know, in her hometown and things like that was the only thing that kind of kept him there and that he could have had so many bigger and better things, but he gladly sacrifice those for her. And I love that and I love him and he's funny and he takes care of her and she takes care of him. Great parental relationship. And with that friends, we'll take our first break. When we come back, we'll share about Things We Like a Latte, then we'll return to our discussion of I'm Not Missing and dig a little deeper.
- Ad: [10:22](#) Hey friends, next week we're going to discuss Hullmetal Girls by Emily Skrutskie. If you'd like to support our podcast and the author, please consider preordering in the novel with our Amazon affiliate link in the show notes. Preorders count towards an author's first week totals, and we get a small kickback from Amazon that allows us to continue bringing you great content. Happy reading!
- Music: [10:49](#) MM,
- Amanda: [10:53](#) Welcome back. It's time for Things We Like a Latte. Danielle, what's your brew of choice this week?
- Danielle: [10:53](#) Well, Amanda.
- Amanda: [10:53](#) Well, Danielle.
- Danielle: [11:04](#) So, in an upcoming episode in August, we will be joined by Lamar Giles who edited the Fresh Ink anthology. And so I'm reading one of his standalone novels now, which is called Overturned. And it is a YA thriller set in Vegas. And the protagonist Nikki is a card sharp and like awesome. And Her dad was a casino owner and got put away in prison. He was framed for murder and she was like, oh, he's innocent. And then he gets released, his, his conviction gets overturned and that kind of sets the story into motion. And I am just loving this ride. I love the Vegas atmosphere. I love how smart and cunning and also ambitious and a little foolhardy Nikki is. So really looking forward to finishing that book. And that's overturned by Lamar Giles. how about you Amanda? What's your brew of choice this week?
- Amanda: [12:07](#) So my brew of choice this week is not a thing of fiction or a video game or anything else. It is a wonderful thing that I have done, which is that I have now

officially an instrument rated pilot. (Woo!) For those of Y'all that don't know, I am currently in flight school training to be a helicopter pilot and that's also why I have been missing several episodes the last couple of months because a, it turns out flight schools kind of hard. I don't know if anybody heard that that was possible, but uh, so it's been a lot of work and the last few weeks we're definitely a gauntlet of a lot of studying and check rides and tests, but I got through it and I'm officially in a summary to pilot. Flight School is not done yet, but I am seeing a bigger light at the end of the tunnel. So. Awesome.

- Danielle: [12:52](#) And you're going to be awesome and you're going to save people
- Amanda: [12:57](#) maybe.
- Danielle: [12:59](#) Well, we're going to take a break and when we come back we'll return to our discussion on I'm Not Missing. The rest of the show will contain spoilers. So if you're leaving us here, keep in touch on instagram and twitter @yacafepodcast. We'll be back.
- Amanda: [13:31](#) Welcome back to the YA Cafe. We're continuing our discussion on I'm Not Missing by Carrie Fountain. If you haven't read this yet, we want to warn you again that this segment will contain spoilers
- Danielle: [13:31](#) spoilers!
- Amanda: [13:42](#) and an illegal road trip. Okay. So one of the very first spoilery kind of things that we find out is that the reason for Miranda's...Oh my God... her just tragic high school trauma of getting stood up to prom. (mocking voice) Can you imagine anything so terrible? Um, this whole time she thought that Nick Allison was the enemy, but it turns out that the enemy was Syd!
- Danielle: [14:11](#) Dun dun dun! Okay. You don't seem very like impressed by this trauma that she had.
- Amanda: [14:15](#) So I'm not.
- Danielle: [14:17](#) So she gets really wrapped up in like "ah, Nick stood me up for prom last year. So now even though I'm totally attracted to him, like I can't be with him because of trauma," but like she has legit trauma in her life.
- Amanda: [14:33](#) Right. So she does, she does. I'm not saying she does it, but I'm saying like the dress in the back of her closet, taunting her. I was just like, (groan)
- Danielle: [14:41](#) yeah, but if she doesn't have the fake trauma to focus on, she has to like focus on her real trauma.
- Amanda: [14:41](#) Maybe. (sings) "the dress is a metaphor."
- Danielle: [14:53](#) I liked the detail of her being like unable to look at this dress. Actually, it's not even the unable to look at the dress. It is the unable to take the dress back because that would be like admitting failure

- Amanda: [15:05](#) because they would ask if it had ever been warned and what have you would have to say, No!
- Danielle: [15:11](#) It was silly, but like realistic, like you can get wrapped up in all sorts of things if you want to.
- Amanda: [15:17](#) Oh yeah. No, it was just a lot of. Especially the first quarter of the book, there was a lot of it that was about like dress trauma and I was like, I cannot, but I did really like the twists that Syd is the one who told Nick not to pick Miranda up for prom and so Syd is the reason that Miranda got stood up for prom.
- Amanda: [15:36](#) I liked that a lot.
- Danielle: [15:37](#) Yeah, I definitely did too. I really like what we learned about Syd slowly over the years, of course of this novel and similar to Monday's Not Coming. Syd is kind of this larger than life friend. Miranda plays it a little closer to the chest and so we love Syd even though we only get a small amount of time to get to know her onscreen (on page ?)... on "scrage"?
- Amanda: [16:06](#) The high quality English degree there for ya. I, I disagree like we had that little bit of time with Syd, but I did not love her and I thought that was kind of the point of her that we see her as like this. Uh, she seems kind of like a person who needed to make other people's lights dimmer to make her own brighter. Like I definitely got that from her early interactions with Miranda, just sort of the way that she's steamrolled over whatever Miranda wanted, but she's clearly like a high energy, very captivating person to follow and be around. I think that came through very clearly and maybe that's what you saw as like a very attractive quality.
- Danielle: [16:43](#) Maybe. I do love larger than life personalities. The thing that got me about Syd was that she never explained herself well. Even when Miranda is face to face with her and they have this opportunity to talk, sit never says like, dude, I'm sorry I should've just confided in you, and I'm like, "Syd, why didn't you just tell your best friend???"
- Amanda: [17:08](#) because Syd's not a vulnerable person. Syd is not a person who's going to be vulnerable. Even to her best friend. Like she did have her vulnerability and that she really cared about this creepy older guy and she got burned for it, so I thought it was very realistic that Syd would not confide in Miranda about it because I think it's clear that while she loved Miranda a lot, she's still considered Miranda sort of beneath her intellectually and like sort of viewed Miranda as a person for her to more take care of and take under her wing then being someone to be able to confide in.
- Danielle: [17:45](#) Oh well I hate that. How do you even come back from that? Like if you're a Miranda, how are you even friends with sit after that? Like you just... To me, you just can't be like, oh, this person bailed out my life for a year and like didn't answer my text messages and didn't care to tell me where she went. And I had to find her. Like, how are you friends with a person like that afterwards?

- Amanda: [18:07](#) I don't know. I mean maybe you're not. It's clear that Miranda did not think the same way about said there towards the end and even for awhile after said left like Miranda starts to realize that Syd kinda dumped her, you know?
- Danielle: [18:20](#) Yeah. I guess that's true. So this book really does end up being about Miranda and her growth rather than Syd's disappearance. Like Syd's disappearance is just a catalyst for Miranda to like grow up a little bit. And I really love at the end of the book when Miranda sees her mom's family. So her mom's family has been in touch with her dad's family and really accept him. So even though, you know, they haven't heard from her mother and her mother walked out on them too, they still have Miranda's dad and Miranda and their lives and I'd love them so much in particular. I love that Miranda realizes that she has something really big in common with Letty who was her mom's best friend and is married to her mom's brother and she says "it only occurred to me right then standing in her kitchen that all the time Letty had been giving me advice about how to deal with Syd's disappearance, she was speaking from her own experience. Her best friend had been "gone, not missing too.""
- Amanda: [19:25](#) I liked that a lot too. I wish we had gotten more of Letty earlier in the novel.
- Danielle: [19:29](#) Me too. They was just like the last 10 percent that we had that family.
- Amanda: [19:33](#) Yeah. There was a definite lack of female characters. I think. So you had like the whole of the relationship where her mother was and where it was, but then there were no other females to have any sort of role in her life. Um, so when Syd leaves, it's pretty much all about her relationships between Nick and her father, which are both wonderful, nourishing relationships, but there is something that's important about having female relationships, especially as like a teenage girl. I think that Miranda realizes what she's missing when she sees Syd's mother and the way that Syd's mother sort of takes her in. And so there's this quote when Miranda is seeing Patience, Syd's mother, for the first time in many years and Patience is taking a look at her and Miranda says, "now my father loved me. He went out of his way to show it, but he'd never have stepped back to look at me this way. He wouldn't even know how it was a pure mom move. A sudden strong wave of grief came over me as I stood there in the middle of Patience's dark, empty living room for the first time in so long I missed my mother." So I do like that it like addresses that this is a hole for her, right?
- Danielle: [20:45](#) It is. And I was thinking this today, it's like the Disney princess thing and the dead mom thing and it's like if a character has an absent mother, particularly if the mother is not dead, like absent absent, right? If the character is a girl and has an absent mother, then that is like a missing limb. If a character is a girl and has a missing father or an absent father, I mean that's just something that a girl's got to get over. Like there's definitely something about having your mom be gone even if you're only eight years old when it happens. That is so hard every day of your life all the way to the end of it. So I thought that that was really strong. I wish we had had Letty in earlier.
- Amanda: [20:45](#) Yeah.

- Danielle: [21:35](#) She could have come to visit. She could have hung out. And one last thing I really wanted to shout out about this book was I love Miranda's realization about religion. At the end of the book, she realizes that she has kind of been keeping herself from religion and she wasn't able to articulate it until the very end when she realized that what she had been avoiding was ending up like her mother.
- Amanda: [22:04](#) Right. In the same way that she does the parallel of Nick not wanting to wind up like his father who is terrible. So finding that thing that she, she loves and she deserves to love without it being all tied up with this negative force in her life.
- Danielle: [22:21](#) Yeah, so overall, really great book. I liked it a lot and we would love to hear what you guys think of it. That's our show for today, friends. You can find us on Instagram and Twitter @yacafepodcast. We'd love to hear from you and if you're enjoying the show, leave us a review on iTunes. Happy reading.