

YA Café Podcast
Episode 62: *Pet*
12 September 2019

- Danielle Hall: 00:00 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 *Pet* by Akwaeke Emezi. Grab a mug of your favorite beverage, friends, and let's talk books.
- Amanda Thrasher: 00:21 Welcome y'all. As always, our first segment will be spoiler-free, so you can stick around even if you haven't checked out the new novel yet. I'm Amanda Thrasher.
- Danielle Hall: 00:29 I'm Danielle Hall, an eighth and ninth grade English teacher. I blog at teachnouvelle.com. Our guest today is author and friend to the podcast, H.D. Hunter. Hi, Hugh.
- H.D. Hunter: 00:39 Hi, friends. Glad to be back.
- Danielle Hall: 00:41 Thank you for joining us again.
- Danielle Hall: 00:43 Big news.
- Amanda Thrasher: 00:44 Dun, dun, dun.
- Danielle Hall: 00:45 Congratulations on your acceptance into the Tin House Writing Workshop.
- Amanda Thrasher: 00:51 Yeah!
- Danielle Hall: 00:51 I want to hear all about what you're looking forward to and just shout out that you're going to come to the Oregon coast and hang out.

H.D. Hunter: 01:00 Yes, yes. I'm so excited. Thank you for the congratulations. This is a really big deal for me. I've been building my career as an independent author for the last four years and I really haven't had many structural opportunities to be with other writers who are at similar places in their career, and get that sort of professional collegiality and feedback. The opportunity to start making a shift and meet more people, learn more about my own writing in a structured way is just amazing. I'm so excited for it.

Danielle Hall: 01:32 Yay.

Amanda Thrasher: 01:32 We're really excited for you.

H.D. Hunter: 01:35 I'm working on some really cool stuff, so I can't wait for you all to read it.

Danielle Hall: 01:37 We look forward to reading it. But today, we read some other awesome writing...

Amanda Thrasher: 01:42 And now I'm going to tell you about it in a totally natural segue. *laughter* The people in the town of Lucille know that there are no monsters anymore, not since the angels came and took them all away. But when a creature from one of Jam's mother's paintings comes to life and declares it's here to hunt a monster, Jam believes it. The creature tells Jam to call it Pet and asks her to help it find a monster lurking in her best friend's house. Can Jam navigate the tricky waters of hunting a monster when no one believes they still exist? Danielle, what did you think of this book?

Danielle Hall: 02:13 Well, I read it today. I read it in one sitting. It was awesome. I've never read anything like this book.

Amanda Thrasher: 02:20 Yeah, I agree. It was really unique in its narrative style and all the choices that they made were really different, and I also really liked it. What about you, Hugh?

H.D. Hunter: 02:30 I'm totally with both of you. I'm in complete awe of Akwaeke Emezi and this book. I've never read anything like it either. I want all the good things for it, and we'll get more into that later, but I want so many good things for this book.

- Amanda Thrasher: 02:44 Agreed. One of the things that really sucked me in from the very beginning was we start with this image of this beautiful painting that Jam's mother has created.
- Danielle Hall: 02:54 Not beautiful.
- Amanda Thrasher: 02:54 Striking is a better word. The act of Jam accidentally bleeding on this painting causes it to come to life. I don't know, I've always found paintings coming to life to be such a primal, visual, I don't know, it just gets me in like a gut way.
- Danielle Hall: 03:13 Yeah, me too. Or like art in general, like "Blink in Doctor Who, and like Voyage of the Dawn Treader with the painting, and there's like hundreds of others. This is not the first painting or piece of art to come to life in a story.
- Amanda Thrasher: 03:29 But the way that Akwaeke described it, it felt like smoke coming to life. I don't know. It was so good. I was totally sucked in from that moment on,
- Danielle Hall: 03:38 And also a little bit violent, right? Because Jam's mother had embedded razor blades into the canvas, which first of all, like if you don't want your paintings come to life, maybe don't put razor blades in them? *laughter* I feel like she had options.
- Danielle Hall: 03:54 If you know that blood is what it takes. Hugh, how did you find the line between sweet and menacing that this book?
- H.D. Hunter: 04:04 *laughter* It was an interesting line to toe for sure. With regard to the painting, I was waiting for the time where we were going to learn more about what was really interesting about the town. And so it's painted as such an idyllic place from the very beginning, and then we get this stark contrast in the way that this painting looks, what it's composed of, how it comes to life. And so for me, that was the first moment that I got excited about because I was like, "Okay, here it is. Here are the two sides of this story that we're going to be dealing with for the entire time."
- Danielle Hall: 04:37 Yeah, for sure. And especially because as soon as the painting comes to life, Jam's mother, Bitter, is like, "Oh," and her dad, Aloe, is like, "It happened again."

Amanda Thrasher: 04:53 I love when there's very rich backstory, and that's clearly there's history here.

Danielle Hall: 04:58 Yes. But it's sort of, in this book, it serves as 'the pineapple incident'. Like, they don't actually talk about what happened before.

Amanda Thrasher: 05:07 We call that 'the noodle incident'. You did the How I Met Your Mother reference, but the TV trope is named after the Calvin and Hobbes reference of 'the noodle incident'.

H.D. Hunter: 05:15 Oh, wow. *laughter*.

Amanda Thrasher: 05:17 Oh, I have done some deep dives into TV tropes. *laughter*

Danielle Hall: 05:22 So, this incident is never fully explored. It's only hinted at, and so it's left to our imagination.

H.D. Hunter: 05:30 I love that because that sort of undergirds a lot about the town and the story in and of itself, you know? And the whole nature of communication between the young people in the story and the guardians in the story, and what they can tell each other and what they can't, and what's been secret. And so it was very interesting to think about, and intriguing to know this happened before, but there's a lot that we don't get, and there's a lot that Jam feels like she doesn't get.

Amanda Thrasher: 05:59 So, Hugh, you mentioned that you were interested in this town of Lucille. I definitely felt that there was a menacing edge to the town of Lucille, especially in the beginning. I think maybe there's something about just how much was described in absolutes. I felt like the story was going to go a different way than it went because it felt like the town of Lucille was like one of those dystopian utopian places, but then it kind of wound up being more on the utopian edge. It just felt like a very menacing place to start with. Even though a lot of things were objectively great, like Jam is trans and has never had any sort of pushback from society or from her family. There was just an easy sense of a person's humanity not being questioned or devalued based on a way that they identified or raised or something like that. But I don't know, I still just felt like there was an edge there.

Danielle Hall: 06:49 I think you bring up a really interesting point about the aspects of this town that establish a binary of people, situations, events and things being either good or bad. And it's said in Lucille, there are no monsters, and we hear about the angels that saved the town, and then it very quickly becomes apparent that monsters and angels are humans. So, Akwaeke Emezi chose our strongest words that we associate with good people or creatures and put them in the book. And I have a quote that I want to explore in conversation.

Danielle Hall: 07:31 "When you think you've been without monsters for so long, sometimes you forget what they look like, what they sound like, no matter how much remembering your education urges you to do. It's not the same when the monsters are gone. You're only remembering shadows of them, stories that seem to be limited to the pages or screens you read them from, flat and dull things. So yes, people forget, but forgetting is dangerous. Forgetting is how the monsters come back." And that really sets up the central kind of theme to be explored in this novel, is what happens when we convince ourselves that everything is fine.

Amanda Thrasher: 08:12 One of the things that is interesting about the quote you just said, Danielle, is that we have read many things that are very much a product of this time right now, where things feel like they are unraveling and there's a lot of evil to fight on all sides. And so it's interesting to have this quote from this book that feels so far removed from our current reality. Nobody is going to forget what monsters are right now. You know?

Amanda Thrasher: 08:37 So I think it is nice to have something that is so far reaching as to consider potential pitfalls for future generations if we fix things. I think that's something that's really creative and optimistic.

Danielle Hall: 08:51 Well said.

Danielle Hall: 08:52 So, we haven't gotten much into concrete details here, aside from the fact that the painting comes to life. So, we did want to talk about a couple of things before we hit the break. One of the things is that our narrator is selectively verbal, so communicates largely through sign language by choice. Occasionally, communicates verbally, and Amanda, like you said, this is just not a problem for our narrator. It's just like part of her identity and accepted by her society. So, her humanity doesn't come from her sexual orientation or her gender identity or the way that she communicates. It comes from the things she contributes to society, and it's really refreshing. But in terms of like a written experience, it is so well done. I didn't have any trouble following the communication. It was really seamless.

Amanda Thrasher: 09:47 Yeah, I think that is really wonderful and I think that it really shows that the limitations for many people aren't the limitations that they actually have. It's just the limitations that society has put on them.

H.D. Hunter: 09:59 I really love that aspect and all of the other aspects that show us characters that we don't always see represented, and it was done so seamlessly and so easily, not from just reading about how the communities that the characters live in accepted and embraced them and supported them in their various expressions, but also as a reader. I think not belaboring the points and just kind of moving through and giving us this picture of what these folks' lives look like, it made it easy to accept for me, and really believable that this type of family unit, this type of person, this type of experience can be very real and can be very valid, which I think we need more literature, always, always, always more literature, that helps to do that for all readers.

Danielle Hall: 10:45 And you wanted to talk about the diction in particular?

H.D. Hunter: 10:49 For sure. Just knowing that anytime we have a group of multiple characters, people are coming from different backgrounds, different life experiences, and thinking about Jam's parents, they're described as having two distinct cultural backgrounds, and they speak differently. It may be a small thing to a lot of people, but reading the way that they use their words and the diction that they choose, and their dialects and their accents was really a big deal to me, and something that was captured in a very beautiful way.

Amanda Thrasher: 11:23 Yeah, I absolutely agree. I also really loved how it was clear to readers who aren't familiar with these kinds of dialects and think that there's just 'weird, bad grammar happening'. It's very clear that Jam's mother, Bitter, is so smart and so talented, and this is just part of her culture and who she is. So, I really loved how well that was done, how her culture wasn't looked down on by you, the reader, as you're reading it, or anybody else in the community.

Danielle Hall: 11:55 So, we watch a lot of Project Runway, and one of the things that judges say about a really excellent garment that clearly took tons of work, "feels effortless", and that is this book for me. There is clearly a ton of work involved and it's beautiful, but reading, it felt just effortless.

Danielle Hall: 12:19 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 Pet and dig a little deeper.

New Speaker: 12:27 *musical interlude*

Danielle Hall: 12:27 Hey friends, are you looking for an easy way to support this podcast?` Order our book choices through the affiliate link in our show notes. You'll be supporting our authors and making sure we get a small kickback to keep our show going. Next step, we'll be discussing *The Stars and The Blackness Between Them* by Junauda Petrus. If you'd like to help us keep bringing you great content, order through the link in our show notes. Happy reading.

New Speaker: 13:00 *musical interlude*

Amanda Thrasher: 13:11 Welcome back y'all. It's time for Things We Like a Latte. Danielle, what's your brew of choice this week?

Danielle Hall: 13:16 Well, Amanda.

Amanda Thrasher: 13:17 Well, Danielle.

Danielle Hall: 13:19 *laughter* So, we finished our first classroom library adoption process.

Amanda Thrasher: 13:25 Yay!

Danielle Hall: 13:26 So we have an adopted classroom library, and yesterday, I packaged up the first book mail. Hashtag bookmail!

Amanda Thrasher: 13:35 Hashtag bookmail!

Danielle Hall: 13:37 It probably will arrive by the time that this episode drops, but I am super excited to share these books with these well deserving students.

Amanda Thrasher: 13:45 Man, it was brutal to pick a classroom library though.

Danielle Hall: 13:47 It was so hard. Everyone deserved it.

Amanda Thrasher: 13:50 There are so many awesome teachers out there.

Danielle Hall: 13:51 So, we really kept hearing that the English teacher's classroom library is sometimes the only library in the school, or even the town. We heard over and over again that people's schools and their homes were in book deserts.

Amanda Thrasher: 14:07 So, if you are a listener who gets a lot of ARCs, we strongly recommend that you find your local school or school that's needing a library and send any unused ARCs to them. Like these kids really love reading, love getting all these different books with different representation. And just a lot of times towns don't have the resources to fill these needs. So, if you're a big time book reader who gets a lot of ARCs and you don't know what to do with them all, send them all to your local schools. They would love it.

Danielle Hall: 14:35 How about you Hugh? What's your brew of choice?

H.D. Hunter: 14:39 So, I went to New York this past week to celebrate a friend's birthday. It was a nice vacation from the scorching Phoenix weather. I was a little bit sad to come back to the heatwave, but while I was there, I got a chance to go to the Guggenheim Museum, and the popular exhibit there right now is a Basquiat exhibit. It's all about his art in relation to particular social justice events and memorializing black and brown people that have suffered injuries at the hands of society.

H.D. Hunter: 15:14 And so it was really, really interesting to take sort of a roller coaster into the past, and look at some of the things that were happening in the eighties and nineties that we see reflected today, and see how artists were constructing those narratives at that time. A really, really enriching experience. If you're in New York or close enough by to go ahead and check it out, I definitely recommend it.

Amanda Thrasher: 15:40 That's great. That's a great Latte.

H.D. Hunter: 15:45 And Amanda,

Amanda Thrasher: 15:45 That's me!

H.D. Hunter: 15:45 What is your brew of choice?

Amanda Thrasher: 15:45 So, I recently read Paul Beatty's *The Sellout* for the first time. Paul Beatty is a really fantastic author. I have previously only read *The White Boy Shuffle* by him, which I really, really enjoyed. And *The Sellout* is just another book that I have never read anything like. It is such an acidic satire. He just has such a way of characterization. He just has such a sharp eye and such an interesting way of writing, and he's incredibly funny. It's a 'not for everybody book', I will say, but I really enjoyed it. Paul Beatty's *The Sellout*.

Danielle Hall: 16:20 We're going to take a quick break and when we come back we'll return to our discussion on *Pet*. The rest of the show will contain spoilers. So, if you leave us here, keep in touch on Instagram and Twitter, @YACafepodcast. We'll be back.

Amanda Thrasher: 16:51 Welcome back, y'all, to the YA Cafe. We're continuing our discussion on *Pet* by Akwaeke Emezi. If you haven't read this yet, we want to warn you, again, that this segment will contain spoilers.

Amanda Thrasher: 17:00 Spoilers!

Danielle Hall: 17:01 So, *Moss and Redemption*'s family is really a family dynamic that Jam envies. Like envy isn't really the right word, but it's sort of like *The Burrow* for her. It's kind of like the Weasley family, like all the people and she's so happy to be there. Even though she loves her parents and they have this great situation at home, she feels so comfortable in *Redemption*'s house. And one of the reasons why this story is complex for Jam is because she is initially very unwilling to accept that there would be a monster in *Redemption*'s home, but at the same time, wanted to protect her friend from that.

Amanda Thrasher: 17:41 I got the impression that she wasn't the most comfortable there because it was so rambunctious. I felt like her little family unit of three was the perfect Jam-sized family. Because I think that when she was there, and she had been there for a long time, she was like, "Oh, wow. Normally I get super overwhelmed by all of these Redemption family people, but today's a good day. I'm hanging in." I don't know, Jam felt very Danielle-like in that respect to me. All these people are fine, but I'm ready to go home to my cat. *laughter*

Danielle Hall: 18:14 Nothing good happens after 10 o'clock. Let's all go home.

H.D. Hunter: 18:18 I really appreciated the convergence of several different types of stories here. We have stories about culture, we have stories about social ills and social justice. We have stories that incorporate fantastical elements, and then we have a narrator and several characters that really give us a lot of philosophical insight, not only into their lives, but into the world around them.

H.D. Hunter: 18:48 It's almost like a 2019 completely genre blended version of Plato's Symposium. There was just so many different conversations about life and humanity and being and choosing that were happening here, and we didn't really get a lot of clean answers, which is the exact kind of story that I love, because I find that those are the ones that I feel I can take and actually apply to situations that I might find myself in.

H.D. Hunter: 19:16 And so I was super impressed with, something that we've talked about over and over again, the complexity of how these stories and these perspectives weave together. It was done very artfully, but I just think that there's so much to get out of that component of the book, the fact that there's so much diversity in thought among our characters and perspective and emotion, and we get to really experience them all diving through it with each other.

Amanda Thrasher: 19:44 Yeah, I liked that too. How there was a lot of complexity and gray area, like you talked about. And I think that one of the examples of that was whenever Jam was making the choice of whether or not to tell Redemption that Pet had come to hunt the monster in Redemption's house. And I really like how Pet told her there's no right or wrong answer, it's just one way or another. They both have good and bad things. And I thought that was a nice piece of the gray complexity that we're talking about, especially with how Pet also, like we talked about before, had such a binary of "this person's good" and "this person's evil". Just a little bit of nuance in that respect, I thought, was refreshing.

Danielle Hall: 20:24 Yeah, I thought that was really fascinating, too. So, Pet arrives and is like, "Things are not black and white." And then at the end, Pet is like, "This person is evil and must die." And Jam's like.

Amanda Thrasher: 20:37 "But wait." *laughter*

Danielle Hall: 20:40 And I thought that was so well done, and it really went beyond the general hero that's like, "You did a bad thing, but I'm going to show mercy." It was truly an awareness of the contradictory binary coming at her, where she was like, "This is not a good worldview. We need a strong third option here."

H.D. Hunter: 21:05 Yeah, I loved that. I thought about it for a long time, and I was so curious about Pet and his motivations. On one hand, it seems pretty determined and motivated in one particular lane. And then it seems to switch lanes, and the power really ends up in Jam and Redemption's hands, as to how to resolve the ultimate conflict, which I think is exactly what readers would hope to happen.

H.D. Hunter: 21:35 Even still, throughout the entire story, Pet is an instrument of sparking and motivating these thoughts and actions in Jam and Redemption. And so there's a part of me that wants to believe that Pet is somehow orchestrating and putting itself as a character to be opposed in some situations and to be listened to in others.

Amanda Thrasher: 21:57 Oh that's such a good reading.

H.D. Hunter: 21:59 It has this soft spot for Jam that we see, and even when it goes to the extreme, it wants to comfort her in an aspect. And so I see it as this caretaker that is developing these other characters on their own maturation journey.

Amanda Thrasher: 22:14 Man, that's such a cool idea. I didn't even consider that, that Pet is playing the long game here.

Danielle Hall: 22:18 Yeah.

Amanda Thrasher: 22:19 I like that a lot.

Danielle Hall: 22:20 And that is echoed in the book, when it is talking about Redemption's father, Beloved, who first sat Redemption and Jam down, and showed them how to arbitrate a disagreement, and how to disagree and still love each other. And so, we have, in this book, this moment of this adult figure teaching them how to be. So, it would be super fascinating. This is one of those we'll never know moments, but I love the reading where Pet is the like ultimate adult figure teaching them how to be.

Amanda Thrasher: 22:57 There's definitely a "Pet is God" undertones at the end.

Danielle Hall: 23:00 Yeah.

Amanda Thrasher: 23:00 Or at the very least a real angel.

Danielle Hall: 23:03 Definitely. I mean we talked about the layered reading, but the most obvious layer is right there in the book, where it's like "Pet was an angel all along". Like you may have called your human people angels that came in and "saved the day" but Pet is the real angel.

Amanda Thrasher: 23:20 Oh, I think Pet was God. That's what I'm going with.

H.D. Hunter: 23:23 *laughter* Decision made.

Amanda Thrasher: 23:24 I mean it was the whole you can't look at him or you freak out and your eyes get burned out. Like that's very Raiders of the Lost Arc-y.

Danielle Hall: 23:34 Or like Supernatural with the angels, but they're not God.

Amanda Thrasher: 23:38 Oh, that's right. The angels burn out people's eyes in Supernatural. Okay, you're right. Fine. Pet is Castiel.

Danielle Hall: 23:43 Aw. *laughter*.

Danielle Hall: 23:45 I thought this book was fascinating because it was definitely YA, but it could have gone middle grade. The tough thing is that the concepts were challenging, but the content is unobjectionable. The main situation in this book, the main monster, it treats it with such a careful hand, it is not explicit in discussing this. And in the same way, I would argue that there are many, many upper grade books. So, not even middle grade, upper grade books, that talk about molestation with a similar, non-explicit approach.

Amanda Thrasher: 24:27 I think that you're not wrong, but also, I think that it is presented in a very different way. So, one of the things that I wanted to talk about in this spoiler section that we alluded to earlier was how Pet views people as monsters or angels, and about how there's such a clear line there between who is a monster and who is an angel to Pet and to Lucille, like to this whole place, which I had a very difficult time with. And so, I thought that it was kind of like the least interesting direction that it could have gone, as far as who the monster was, because it's something that's so clearly terrible. You know what I mean?

Danielle Hall: 25:11 Oh, I see. See what you mean. So it might have been more interesting to go for a more shades of gray monster.

Amanda Thrasher: 25:21 Right. Or to consider how this classification of monsters and angels actually impacted the world. So, one of the things that was mentioned, was there are no free monsters in Lucille. I don't know if y'all got this and it crawled under your skin immediately, but then it means that there's still this huge prison industrial complex in Lucille.

Danielle Hall: 25:44 That was mentioned at the beginning of the book, because it seemed that Bitter and Aloe disagreed. I didn't mark the page, but Bitter called them rehab centers, and Aloe said prisons, cages, and it was clear that they disagreed on the function of incarceration in this reconstructed society.

Amanda Thrasher: 26:05 And I think that undercurrent wouldn't be lost for YA readers, but I think it might be lost for middle grade readers, and middle-grade readers might not get this menace of Lucille, and might think more like, "Well why don't we just lock away all the monsters?"

Danielle Hall: 26:21 What do you think, Hugh?

- H.D. Hunter: 26:22 This is fascinating to hear the different opinions. I usually like to defer to the educator's perspective, you know? There's such a diversity of interest and grasp with readers. I'm always amazed when I go and visit classrooms, and talk to students about what they're reading and how they're understanding it.
- H.D. Hunter: 26:43 I definitely feel that the book is very layered, and so I liked that, because I feel like it extends the utility out to older ages. But thinking about it going back to the other way, will they be equipped to read and understand? Sure. But I would want to feel like a young person in the middle grade could read this and really get the most out of it, and I do think that there are a significant amount of just details and nuances that it would be helpful to them to have someone guide them through.
- Amanda Thrasher: 27:14 Yeah, that makes sense. Like having it be sort of on the middle grade end of things, but with more structure and support around it, versus just having it on the wall for them to find on their own kind of thing.
- Danielle Hall: 27:26 I think a lot about this whole "what is appropriate for middle school" question. Because first of all, let me be clear, it varies enormously based on the students and based on their upbringing, and based on are they getting it from the library or are they having some sort of guidance, like you talked about, Hugh? But there are dark books geared towards middle schoolers. I mean even *The Giver* is dark and layered. So, just because a book is complex doesn't necessarily mean that it's not appropriate for middle school. So, I thought that would be an interesting question to bring to the table. Could this find a home in the middle school library?
- H.D. Hunter: 28:08 One thing that I have started thinking about more is the portrayal of the main characters, especially if there are young people in the books, and how a young person in that same age range might connect. And so, knowing that *Redemption's* younger brother, who is sort of the object of the evils that are happening via this monster is on the lower end of that spectrum of age.
- H.D. Hunter: 28:35 I really thought about what could a young person who maybe has experience with a situation like this, or knows a friend that may be going through something difficult, and can glean any sort of knowledge or awareness about a real life situation from the narrative. And knowing that *Redemption's* brother is younger and probably closer to that age in our pure YA readers would be, I like to think that might be helpful for the younger age of students, as well.
- H.D. Hunter: 29:08 So, there could probably be an entire separate podcast. There probably is a podcast, already, about depictions of Black people throughout history in the media, and in different sort of artistic narratives. And I think, at this point in history, a lot of consumers and people who follow work

that has Black characters as central characters, we want stories that make sure that folks who watch them can understand that the Black experience, if we want to call it that, is not monolithic. And that we see different representations of people from different places and who like different things, who care about different things.

H.D. Hunter: 29:49 And so, that discussion happens a lot when new things come out, new movies come out, new TV series. It's always, "Is this the same old story that we see recycled, or is this something fresh that we really feel like this generation of people can get behind, and other generations of people can come to understand what they've been shown for so long in a new way?"

H.D. Hunter: 30:11 And when I think about what people expect out of those conversations, Pet is it for me. Like this is what I think people need when they say, "We want new stories, fresh stories, things that are inclusive, things that show people of color as being just as complex as anybody else, and that make us feel seen, no matter who we are." So I'm really, really excited about everything that this book is going to be, and all the lives that it's going to reach. And I really hope that it expands to the point that as many people as possible are able to read it and see themselves in it.

Amanda Thrasher: 30:52 Well said.

Danielle Hall: 30:54 And that's our show for today, friends. Thank you so much for joining us, Hugh.

H.D. Hunter: 30:58 Thank you for having me. I loved this. Always.

Danielle Hall: 31:01 Anytime.

Danielle Hall: 31:02 You can find Hugh on Instagram [@hd_tsd](#), and at thesoutherndistrict.com. You can find us [@YACafepodcast](#). We'd love to hear from you. Please consider leaving us a review on iTunes. Happy reading!