

A Million Quiet Revolutions Transcript

Welcome to Reading the Rainbow, brought to you by the Dauphin County Library System. For the book curious looking for their next good LGBTQ+ read. Listen in as queer library staff discuss the Own Voice stories they've been reading.



Ashton: Alright. Hi, I'm Ashley. My pronouns are she/her, or they/them.

Amber: Hi, I'm Amber. My pronouns are she/her.

Ashley: And this week, we are discussing the book *A Million Quiet Revolutions* with the author themselves, Robin Gao. So Robin, can you please give a brief introduction of yourself?

Robin: Totally. I'm super happy to be here. My name is Robin Gao. I use it, fe, and he/him pronouns. And I am a queer poet and author of *A Million Quiet Revolutions*, *Ode to My First Car*, and another book, *Dear Mothman*.

Ashley: Great. Thank you so much. And so, yeah, author of three separate books and quite the poet. Today, we'll be talking about *A Million Quiet Revolutions* particularly. Could you also give a brief description of that book for our listeners?

R: So *A Million Quiet Revolutions* is about two young trans boys who are, they've fallen in love. So it's a trans-for-trans love story. And they're also discovering the stories of queer people in history. Specifically, they discover the story of two Revolutionary War soldiers who were assigned female at birth, but lived as men. And they find a lot of connection to these stories because they are also, like, writing letters to each other as one boy, Aaron, moves away from their small town that they're from. And they kind of continue to question what it means to find yourself in history and some of the complicated histories of living in the United States.

Amber: So, like we kind of talked about when we all first popped on, the reason I was really excited about being on this episode of the podcast is because I have a history degree and I love reading about history and I love reading about history of queer people especially. What prompted you to write on this topic?

R: So a lot of my impetus behind writing the book was thinking like, what is a book that I wish I would have had like when I was a teenager? And I think that I felt a really like glaring lack of discussion around LGBTQ+ people in history. And I've always loved history. Like my dad used to work for our town's historical society. I spent a lot of my time at flea markets. I am really interested in history. But as I began to come into myself as a queer person, I started to lose interest because I started to see just how much of our history is filtered through a cisgender and heterosexual lens. And I thought that some of the best places that I've learned about history have not actually been books, usually, is actually like on the internet through like queer scholars sharing things on Instagram posts and stuff like that. And so I thought that that could be a good parallel story for some characters to go through. And really, like, at the heart of the story I wanted to empower people to dig for those stories. Because they are there in like any time period, it's just a matter of looking for them and finding them. And then just as part of like my own life, I love reading about queer history. It's like my favorite thing to read non-fiction books about. And I'm really happy that there's been more and more books about just times of queer history. And so it's just also, like, an interest of mine on the side.

Ashley: Yeah, that's great. And when I was reading the book, it kind of had me thinking about, you know, myself growing up in central Pennsylvania, in a public school system, trying to think of the first time I encountered a queer person in history. And I really had to sit and think about it and

remember how I felt because, in reading Oliver discovering these things on Twitter through, you know, LGBTQ scholars was just, like, really exciting to, you know, experience with them. And yeah, I learned about Oscar Wilde in English class in high school, but it was just very—not trigger-coded—but it was told in kind of a humorous way of, you know, code words and things that he would fit into his plays to watch for reactions from potentially other gay men in the audience of his performances. Like that was the extent of us talking about him being a gay man. And so it wasn't until I think in grad school when I personally had come out and sought after those things and kind of did a deep-dive on the internet. So it was really, it was really nice to read a book where there are teens who, you know, are uncovering these things and getting to see these characters experience that joy. And I don't know, it was, yeah, it was really nice.

R: Definitely. And then like the other thing about learning about queer history too is that like, when I went to college, I learned that a lot of the figures that I did study in school were queer, but we're always taught about queer folks through like a very heterosexual cisgender lens. And then, so we don't always get like the full picture of figures in history who we like. And I think I felt like I had missed opportunities to like feel represented because there are so many figures in history that like I did learn about. Like a great example is like Langston Hughes is like a poet that I loved for a really, really long time. And I didn't know that he was a gay man until like college. And I think that if I would have known sooner, I also like, it would have enhanced my reading of his work and it would have like, you know, further informed my appreciation for his work. Not to say that I don't appreciate people's work who isn't queer, but like, you know, you have to see all the aspects of someone to like fully see them.

Amber: Yeah. And I think especially we're better now, but I think especially for authors like Langston Hughes, that—I would imagine—has to really inform so much of their work, just having those feelings and not being able to be open about them.

R: Yeah, definitely.

Ashley: And also I think like Amber said, it's things are, you know, progressing and getting better, but there's also always this argument made within academia and history, of “well, language that we use is very different from what people used in the past. So you can't say that X historical figure was gay because they didn't say that themselves. Or there's not enough evidence. Like we just have these romantic letters to a quote unquote friend. Like that doesn't mean they're gay though.” Like this fight to really, sometimes it feels like they're really just trying so hard to make the person straight and not, you know, imagine that even if you can't, now, in present time, ask them or know for sure their identity. Yeah.

R: Totally, and I think that in general, people again, applying that lens of, I think that because the dominant culture was always the one that doesn't seem like it is like a system, like straight people or straight historians don't see that they are filtering what they see through that perception. And so I think that it's always seen as like queer folks trying to write something onto somebody's history. When really also there's that bias written on history through a perspective of not considering queer folks and their perspectives. And I think that there's room to hold simultaneously the fact that we can't know why people or how people identify because the language is different, but we can also acknowledge that there are like shared and parallel experiences. I especially think about, like, the experiences of trans folks. Like we know since the beginning of time that people have identified with genders different than that they were assigned at birth. That doesn't, I think that that fact alone means that, like, we have a kinship with those people, even if like their understanding or the words that they would use are like slightly different or it's more nuanced or it's culturally specific. Like I don't think that, I think that we can still like find that like connection and community with folks, even if like we acknowledge that like they did not know what trans was because trans wasn't a thing. And then the other thing that I bring into it too is that like, you know, like for a lot of time periods, like it, there wasn't a word for trans because it wasn't seen as, like, that “othered.” So like some of that is also related to that. So now I'm just off on a tangent, but I love thinking about these questions. I recently read this book called *Before We Were Trans* by Kit Heyam. And it is really fascinating. And I wish

that I had read it before I wrote *A Million Quiet Revolutions*. It didn't change my opinions that much, but it just really is basically like an excellent examination of folks who are living as genders different than they were assigned at birth, like across different cultures and history. And it's, it's fabulous. And I think that these are a lot of questions that like Aaron and Oliver in the book are grappling with, because they're kind of like coming up against this thing of realizing that they've kind of been failed by a lot of the systems that they have. They realize that they kind of have to make this space for themselves. And I think it's, I really wanted them to be able to do that, even if they sometimes meet barriers and stuff like that.

Amber: I was also really interested in the fact that Aaron and Oliver understood that it was possible that their soldiers might not have necessarily existed in the way they thought of them, but that didn't diminish how meaningful those stories were to them.

R: Yeah, totally. Yeah. And I think in some ways it almost makes them like, not more meaningful, but I think that it like, I think for the boys in the book, I think that they are really like excited by the possibilities, at least Oliver is, because Oliver is such like a puppy dog when he's discovering things. And I love Oliver. It's really interesting. I feel like both of those characters, like I put like different parts of myself in each of them. Because some people are like, are you Aaron or are you Oliver? And I'm like, really, I like took part, I like, feel like I put parts of myself in a blender and then kind of came with my characters. That's usually how my characters come out. Like I'm not somebody who can write a character that's like radically different than myself.

Ashley: Yeah, that makes sense. And Oliver, I loved both of the boys, but I loved how excited Oliver would get when uncovering these things. But also, you know, Aaron clearly loved him so much that it was kind of infectious and, you know, made him interested too. Your characters are just, yeah, I felt like the character development was just very strong and really helped... I don't know, to me it felt like the verse, the use of verse really helped to strengthen them and made me get to know them a bit better. But, Robin, earlier though, you mentioned that you've been reading a lot of queer nonfiction, but, you know, obviously this is a young adult book that's fiction. What is the importance of discussing queer history and finding queer voices in history, especially in the form of a fictional, like, young adult book?

R: Well, I think when we're talking about like, like young adult novels in general, I just like find writing for youth and writing with youth is just like one of the most important things that like, writers can do. Because like, this is a time where a lot more folks, at least in my experience, like kind of read or like engage with these ideas. And I feel like it's kind of like a duty to like, you know, trust young folks with like complicated issues and give them space to like explore and work through them. And so I think that that's kind of one of the reasons why it's important that it's like in a young adult fiction sphere. And then fiction, I think allows us the space to like re-try moments in our lives. And I think a lot of like the book for me, especially because it's written in my hometown, like I was not out in high school. I like understood that I was like gender-question-mark something. But I didn't like have access to a lot of those like young adult kind of queer experiences. I didn't come out until I was probably like, I think maybe like 20. So I think that a lot of my approach too is like, again, that question of like, what did I need as a young person? And how can I try to create that space for other folks? And I think a lot of the scenes and issues I present to is just to kind of like, give people a place to experiment and understand ideas. Because I think fiction can provide that for us with, like, lower stakes sometimes than nonfiction, because you can like think through complicated issues in a way that like, feels almost hypothetical, but it's not if that makes any sense. I think about that, especially with like, a lot of people ask me like, why I have like a very like, you know, clear sex scene in the book. And what I tell people is like, I cannot think of a book that I've read in my whole life, where like true trans people have sex in a way that feels, like, comforting and, like, affirming. And I'm sure they exist. I'm not saying that mine is the only one. But I was like, how can a young person be expected to like, explore questions of consent and what they want with their bodies, if they like never have any templates ever? And it's not to say that everyone's experiences would even be similar to the characters in the book.

But just like being able to see an interaction that is, like, affirming and healthy and loving can be a space where people can be like, Oh, well, like, I deserve that. And I deserve to carve out that space for myself.

Ashley: Yeah, I was trying to think upon reflecting and after reading your book, if I had read any other books or stories about two trans boys or two trans people, in general, being in love and having a loving relationship like Aaron and Oliver do and couldn't come up with any and like you said, I'm sure they exist, but it's in like, the popular like, reading lists and publications and things that you see in bookstores, like there aren't a whole lot. So it was it was really nice to see them navigate their experiences together and seeing how different it can be for different trans people. But you know, I've read other sex scenes and other young adult books, but this one was just so... I don't know how to explain it. The two are so earnest, right? Like, you just, I can't explain it. I'm sorry. I can't think of the right words. It was just so... you could just really feel the loving care for one another. And it was it was more about that than anything else, I think. It was just, I don't know, I'm gonna stop talking because I can't.

Amber: I absolutely agree with everything that you just said, Ashley. I for sure have never encountered, I don't think I've ever read a book with the two, the two like romantic leads, both being trans people at all, and definitely none with such a tender sex scene between them. One of the other—sorry to just jump topics without a good like—

R: It's okay!

Amber: Something I was really interested and excited about as soon as I got this book, because I did not know is that it's written in verse, which is so interesting. I also love poetry. My second major was also English. I am just really interested in your thought process behind writing this story in verse rather than in prose.

R: That's interesting. I'm just like a poetry person of center, like stories come naturally to me in poetry. My master's is in creative writing poetry. And so it's kind of just like the storytelling mode that comes really naturally to me. I didn't really know that verse novels were totally a thing until I took a class in graduate school. And I didn't even mean to take the class, like, I was forced to pick an elective and the electives that I wanted weren't available. And so I ended up taking this young adult class. And I read the book *The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo. And it is such an amazing book. And it really opened up the potential to me to like write a story and poems. And it's so interesting, like people will often say things like, oh, this like, like verse novels are like so innovative and new. And what I'm always like is like, but isn't poetry like our oldest like storytelling form? Like most of the like epics that we read about those are usually told in poetry. And so to me, it seems kind of like a renaissance of like how to tell stories through poems. And for me, I also feel like it's really a natural space for talking about young adult experiences. For me, like my young adulthood was really characterized by like, very strong and tumultuous emotions. And I did write poetry throughout my whole like, I would say, you know, I mean, I still write poetry all the time. But like, I was a very avid like poetry kind of journaller person. And I think that sometimes poetry can capture like the nuances, and like sometimes contradictions that like we experience as young people and as just people in general. And I think that the way that they that takes up space on the page is also just like, like a really clear embodiment of that. And so that's one of the reasons why like, like, I don't write, I write prose if I'm writing for adults generally, which is so interesting to me. But the, when I'm writing for youth, it does tend to come out as poetry, though I do have a prose book coming out in the new year, which is a little nerve wracking, because I usually have poetry books. But yeah, I would say that that's like, kind of my history with verse novels. And I love them now. I love to read them too. Oh, and then the other thing is like, when I was a young person, I am, I have like several learning disabilities. And I have a really hard time like focusing on reading. But like verse novels from, from when I was younger, which I, I guess I forgot about until I went to grad school. But when I was younger, like, they were like the only things that I could read because they're like pretty compact. And like you can get a story pretty quickly. There's this book by Sharon Creech called *Love That Dog*, which I remember being really formative to me

because it was like one of the first books that a chapter book that I finished on my own. It's told in poems that are like kind of poetry letters, but it's very beautiful. And it was really important to me. And so I think that that's another reason why I find poetry helpful is because it's compact. And I think for a lot of people, it can actually make it a little bit more accessible.

Amber: Yeah, I found that it flowed so well, especially in the areas that went back and forth between Aaron and Oliver. It felt conversational and, and yeah, it goes by so fast in a way that feels natural, or at least that was my experience with it. I also really like that—this was not in my teenage years, but in my, when I was in my first queer relationship, I, I also wrote poetry. It was very bad poetry, but I, I really identified with like those kinds of emotions in a poetry form. One thing I noticed when reading it in that form is like, obviously one of the, I cannot remember which way it goes now. I want to say Oliver was on the left side of the page and Aaron was on the right side when it was more led by one or the other, but there were a couple of pages I noticed that were formatted really differently. And I was interested to know whether that was intentional, whether that was just how you felt that particular part of their story was meant to go.

R: Yeah, I really love like visual poetry, which is like kind of sometimes what people would call that. And I really love to play with like how moving words differently on a page can impact how you read it. And, and you know, everyone's going to read it differently, but if there's a large space, you might take a different kind of a pause. I think about that Valley Forge poem. I, I don't know exactly where it is in the book, but I have my book with me and that one's, I think it's kind of shaped a little bit like a Christmas tree. And yeah, so sometimes these instances are, in that instance, it's like kind of a chance to be a little bit playful. And then sometimes it's also about that, like, how does the movement or the shape of the poem, like impact how you read it. And like I said, I really enjoy poetry that's like playing with the space on the page and seeing what you can do with that to impact someone's reading of it to convey different kinds of feelings. Especially like if there is a like indent in a line, I typically understand that as like a pause or like trailing off a little bit. And that's one of the things I love about poetry that we don't really get in prose is that like we have that ability to manipulate things on a page to, you know, impact people's readings, convey certain breaths or pauses or movements that might happen in speech that's a little bit harder to convey in prose.

Ashley: Yeah. The, the rhythm of the book as a whole, but some of this more playful—I guess I would call it—poems throughout were really fun. And yeah, I just loved the rhythm of it. I listened to it partially as an audio book and that was, that was a really good experience as well as, you know, reading it on the page. And Amber mentioned that, you know, Oliver was on the left, left-aligned on the pages and Aaron was right-aligned on the pages. But I also noticed that there is kind of a split in the book as well, where Oliver was narrating a lot of the first half of the book and then Aaron narrated the second half. Was there a thought process behind that or it just kind of how it worked out or?

R: I think that for me, I was trying to think of like what perspective might be best to like tell what parts of the story. And originally it was going to be mostly from Oliver's perspective. And then I came to like a certain point where I was like, I really feel like Aaron needs to talk more in order for people to like understand what he's thinking. Because like as a writer, I like understood what was going on for Aaron. But I thought like with missing that piece of like having a moment to like really be fully immersed in Aaron's perspective that like part of him as a character might be left out. And so I found myself starting to write in his perspective and I kind of abandoned the idea of having Oliver narrate the second half of the book too.

Ashley: I really enjoyed that because as you go through the first half of the book, you know, Aaron's family leaves Kutztown and you get the sense that there is this, not rift, but there is this physical separation, but there's also like a gap in communication that's getting bigger and bigger. And so I started worrying like, oh no, like is Aaron kind of moving on from this friendship? But then having him come in as the narrator for the last half, you know, you get, like you said, you wanted to give the reader more of his story. And so I thought that was for me as a reader was really comforting. And also

I was just really interested in learning more about him and his family and what was happening. So I really appreciated that, that it was split like that.

R: I'm glad, I enjoyed it a lot too. I think that like, like I said, like I really feel like Aaron and Oliver like hold different parts of myself. And so it also felt kind of like fulfilling to get to flesh out that part of myself in like a more full way.

Ashley: So you mentioned briefly that the book takes place in your hometown. So that was one of my questions because it's clearly written with love for Kutztown. So I was just curious, the reasons behind your choice of locations, but now I know you're Pennsylvania native, but we were also kind Amber and I were talking about the closeness to Valley Forge and that history. Did that also have an influence behind the locations of the book or?

R: Yeah, definitely. I think I really picked a lot of locations that are like important to me in my life or like I had my own connection to. Something that's interesting just in general about me and my family is that a lot of us, not me, but like my dad and my brother do actually do war reenacting. And that is like kind of how I became fascinated with the subject in general. It's definitely not something for me. Like I am very like skeeved out by the idea of, like, war in general. And by that, I mean, I just like, I think it would feel too sad to me, but I was really fascinated by it because there is a lot of war reenactors who definitely do like glorify the idea of war and like in a way that's like super negative. But from like my brother, for instance, who's like a slight, my slightly younger brother, he really views it as like teaching people about history and like showing how terrible things were and kind of like in a solidarity with people who went through that. My brother specifically reenacts World War I, which is definitely a little bit of a different context. A fun fact is that this book was originally written as them as World War I reenactors. And I changed the whole setting and everything at the advice of my agent. And I think that the change was really valuable and fruitful, but that initial curiosity came from like my family, my family who does war reenacting. And my dad used to be a reenactor at Valley Forge. So that's also where some of my interest in that specific history came from. My family would go to Valley Forge all the time and like walk around and just learn about things or look at the different like cabins and all that kind of stuff. It's a very interesting place. Like I said, I did grow up around just like history in general, but I also think that choosing to set it in Kutztown was kind of related to that, like almost a healing practice is to like, you know, they still face discrimination in Kutztown, but like these two queer characters could find themselves and, you know, fall in love. And I don't know, giving, I was kind of giving characters something that I didn't really get to experience. And I've really loved how much a lot of people in Kutztown have really embraced the book. I did get to have like an author talk and reading at like a bookstore in town, and it was really wonderful. That bookstore didn't exist for like most of my growing up. And so like, I'm definitely a little bit jealous of people who live there now because it's a really beautiful bookstore. It's called Firefly and it's a really wonderful like community gathering kind of location. But I digress. I definitely think that those are kind of the reasons behind why I set things where I did. And then I also, I mean, I lived in New York City too. And so that's kind of how I chose where Aaron ended up moving. I tend to try to write what I know just because it's more authentic in my opinion, because I can, you know, I've lived there, I've been there. So I can give the textures and sounds and everything necessary to write good poetry.

Amber: That was one of the things I was curious about, which you have already answered, but like why historical reenactments? I do have a question unrelated to the book about historical reenactments that Ashley and I were wondering, is: when you know how a battle is going to end, what is your goal as a soldier in a reenactment?

R: I think that most people just like want to die last. Like, they want to make it as far as they can because they want to, like, you know, being part of the battle. They take the rules pretty seriously, though. So like if it seems like you would have died, then you're just like supposed to be dead. I think that people really get into it in the same way you might get into like being in a play. Like, you know, like you could get really into your character, even if you know that whatever they're trying to do is not going to turn out. And I definitely see that play out for people.

Amber: That's just really cool in general. I have, I've seen reenactments, but it's usually like the tent villages where you go in and the person tells you about their particular thing they do. But yeah, I've never actually seen one of an actual battle before. So I was interested in that. Something I really enjoyed about Aaron and Oliver was how different their experiences were, and how you could kind of see them side by side, both in their setting, their family and background, and the way that their families reacted to them when they came out to them. That wasn't a question. That was just something that I really enjoyed.

R: Well, I'm glad that it came through that way because it was something I was really trying to kind of compare and contrast with. Not into like, you know, on the nose of a way, but just like, you know, how naturally like me and my friends experiences have been is that like I have had friends who have really like affirming families like Oliver's family. And then I've also had friends who've really struggled with it, but also have had family that they felt really close to and have like come a long way in the same way that Aaron's family is. And so I wanted to show two examples, and I didn't want either of the families to be like ridiculously bigoted in a way that wasn't redeemable at all. Because I think that most people's experiences, while some people do really experience that, and it's really terrible, I think a lot of people's experiences fall a little bit more in that, like, this is really painful, we're trying to figure this out together kind of terrain. And so that's what I wanted to give with Erin's story, because I think that that's a perspective that I don't see quite as often. And it's necessary, especially because that's a terrain that a lot of youth are navigating, is having a place where they like really love and feel connected to their family, and also are like really struggling with being accepted the way they deserve to be.

Ashley: Yeah, I really appreciated learning about Aaron's family and, you know, how they navigated his coming out, and was really relieved at the end, because you're a lot of the stories that we consume either have really accepting families who are just like ready, you know, whatever you need, like, we're ready to help you through this. And then, you know, the other side of media will show you the really sad stories, right? And so there is that middle ground where, you know your family's still going to love you, if you do come out to them, but you're not sure how that's going to change the dynamics in your relationships. And that can be really scary, right?

R: Totally.

Ashley: So it was refreshing to read that in this book. Another topic that was kind of explored in your book, and I love thinking about this whenever I read any book, but especially young adult books that are about queer protagonists, is the idea of mental health and LGBTQA support. And so, you know, Aaron, especially when he moves, is having a lot to deal with, right? But then finding the LGBTQ group at his high school, and things like that, you know, it's a book in verse, it's very fast-paced, so I was just wondering, like, the decision to include that?

R: I think I wanted Aaron to have, like, the opportunity to have that space, because he has so many crappy things happen to him. I usually try to balance my character's experiences. I know that in real life, people don't always have balanced experiences. But I like to, especially with queer youth because we have to hear so much pain, I really want there to be, like, a give-and-take. So, like, Aaron goes through all that with his family, but gets to experience having an affirming school community. And having that shift, despite moving being hard, also having those positive notes to it where he does, like, find community with folks, in a way that he didn't in Kutztown. Especially because Kutztown is, and still is today, like, a predominately white community, and because of that tends to be not accepting and welcoming of folks of color. And I thought especially, like, as a queer character of color, like, I wanted him to, like, not have that be his only narrative, and that he could find that community and feel celebrated for his whole self in that way, even if it's not something that could happen within his family, that it's something that he could find with, like, his peers.

Ashely: Truly lovely, thank you. Amber did you have any other questions?

Amber: I don't think so. I think we touched on most of the stuff that I had, that had really popped out to me. But was there anything in this book, Robin, that you were especially interested in making sure came through that we haven't touched on?

R: I think I've gotten to hit on most points of things. Trying to think. I do think that there is also, like, a compare-and-contrast that I was doing also, just like with folks' religious experiences. I think, because that can be so interconnected with, like, what it means to be trans, or what it means to be part of a community. And especially, like, growing up, like I grew up in the Catholic church, I think that it definitely has created sometimes, like, a barrier for me being understood within my family. And I didn't also want to only portray, like, negative depictions of people's relationships to religion, because I also have a lot of friends who, like, do feel really celebrated by their religious community. And that was one of the reasons why I chose to have Oliver be someone who's Jewish. Because a lot of my friends who I'm close to who do have positive experiences, have had good experiences within their Jewish communities. And so I thought that it could be a point of contrast to say that, like, [inaudible] people *can* be accepting and welcoming of a full person, and have it be connected to a religion, or a spirituality or something like that. That was probably the last thing I could think to add. I've been really appreciative of your questions, this was a really good conversation. I apologize if I've rambled too much at all, but I can talk about these subjects forever.

Ashley: No, I thought—yeah, you did a wonderful job. Thank you so much! I feel like if anything I was the one who rambled. But—

R: Not at all.

Ashley: I do have one last question. Because I was just kind of shocked in reading it, and this might be, I don't know, too spoil-y for the podcast itself, but, and it's a reenactment question: I was kind of surprised that Oliver and Aaron made this big plan, and you know it was quite a risk, and you know expensive and they had to do a lot of planning to go to this reenactment, and then they're some of the first soldiers to die in the battle. I didn't realize, like— [laughter]. Like a lot of their time was just laying on the ground talking to each other, it just kind of, surprised with that. Is that true that the newest soldiers have to be the first to, like, die?

R: It's definitely common. Especially because they don't know how to, like, avoid it too. And I also think that for Aaron and Oliver that, the other thing I was thinking about, is that they are really into history, and really into history for a lot of reasons that might not always line up with other reenactors. So, I think that they also might be like, "I might just die now because some people are taking this a little—they're like too into the fighting part of it." Because there are, like, there's like a wide range of, like, why people are into it. And some people are like a little bit too, like, "I love to fight!" And so I also thought that, like, once they got there, that I think that another, like, question of wanting to reenact was really just them wanting to, like, get away and play pretend. Like I think that something that a lot of, like I experienced like as a teenager and a lot of teenagers experience this is like, you are becoming an adult, you're like moving toward adulthood, and then you still have these flickers of wanting to be playful and wanting to play pretend, so you have to find, like, appropriate outlets for that. For me like I cosplayed, like I dressed up all the time and I went to anime conventions and stuff like that. And I really think that reenacting for a lot of people is basically like cosplay in some sort of a sense. And so I think that that's also, like, a little bit related to what they are doing.

Ashley: That makes sense, thank you. I'm quite jealous. I always came up with elaborate costume ideas and like little vision boards for anime conventions for myself, but I never actually went as anything. But thank you for answering all of our questions and taking time to discuss your book with us. It's been really fun, and really cool to learn a bit more about you and your work. Is there anything forthcoming that you'd like to promote for your listeners? You mentioned a book in prose coming out in the new year?

R: Yes! In the Spring I have a book coming out called *Gooseberry*. And it's, I've been calling it like my non-binary kids' dog book. So I loved books about dogs growing up, as evidenced by that book *Love That Dog*. And I've been warning everyone that the dog does not die, so everything is okay, it's gonna be okay. And it's about, like, a young non-binary person named Bee who wants to be a dog trainer, and has also had experience being in the foster-care system for most of their life, and gets adopted by a family that is a queer couple. And they get to adopt a dog whose name is Gooseberry. And the dog is from a lot of different, like, not great homes, and so he is a little bit wild. And so Bee and their family works to learn how to train them, because Bee wants to be a dog trainer. So, that's *Gooseberry*, it's coming out in May I believe. I'm really looking forward to it because I, one of my, like, special interests as a kid especially was, like, dogs. And so, yeah, I'm excited to carve out that space for a non-binary kids' dog book.

Ashley: That sounds delightful! And Gooseberry's a great dog name. I'm very much looking forward to it, to reading that.

R: Okay, and thank you all so much. This has been really wonderful, and I appreciate your questions, and like, for sitting with my words.

Amber: Thank you so much for coming and talking to us.

Ashley: Yeah, thank you!



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