

3.5 Good Vibes Only: July Favourites

Angourie [host]

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which this work was developed and is presented. I pay my respects to Elders past, present, and emerging.

[slow acoustic guitar theme music]

Angourie [host]

Hello and welcome back to The Community Library: a podcast, book club, and discussion space. I'm your host, Angourie Rice.

[theme music fades out]

Angourie [host]

So, here in Melbourne, it's been another month in isolation for us. How's everyone feeling? In a phrase, I've been feeling ... all over the place. I feel like my mood changes almost every hour, like, one moment I'm feeling really positive and motivated, and then the next I just want to crawl into bed and watch YouTube for hours. As I'm sure you've all noticed, I like to keep things pretty positive on The Community Library, especially in times like these when I think we all need a bit of fun escapist content to get us through the day. But I do want to acknowledge that feeling sad and unmotivated and like a blob is also really important. There are some days when I just let productivity fly out the window, and I stay in my PJs, I eat lots of toast, and I watch lots of TV. And even if I feel worse at the end of the day, I try to not beat myself up about it. I think for me it's important to feel those sad feelings and have those bad days so that I can move on and have a better day tomorrow. Something I said to myself a lot this month was "just take it one day at a time." And this month I have discovered a lot of things that have made some of my worse days better, and I'd like to share them with you in case they also brighten up your day, or week, or month, or even just a moment. So, first of all, I want to start off with what I've been reading.

If you follow me on Instagram, which is [@the_community_library](#), you'll know that I participated in the Reading Rush, which is a week-long readathon with a series of prompts. I had a really great time, I documented it all and uploaded the videos on IGTV, so you can watch what I got up to and what books I read over there, I'll have that linked in the show notes and on the blog and – you, you know where to find it.

I do want to address what happened on the last day of the Reading Rush. The hosts of the Reading Rush chose a group book, *Such a Fun Age* by Kiley Reid, however they didn't prioritise reading the book, they actually didn't finish it, and their book club live-stream turned into kind of a Q and A. This was quite upsetting to members of the book community who participated in this readathon, myself included. [@smol_babimochi](#) on Twitter said she found it particularly ignorant for them to , quote: "choose a book by a black author only to not prioritize/read it. This comes across as performative activism and I don't want it. Not only that but the title of the live show is misleading. They laugh about not reading the book for the first minute of the live then move on to other things." End quote. She also says, quote: "you've seen how difficult it is for authors of color,

especially bipoc, to get the same recognition as their white peers. This was a chance for the Reading Rush hosts to uplift a black author but instead they dropped the ball, laughed about it and moved on.” End quote.

I’ll link the whole Twitter thread in the show notes so you can give it a read, as well as some videos from booktubers that I watch explaining why what the hosts did was so ... kind of hurtful and ignorant. I didn’t know about this until the Reading Rush was done for me in Australia, but I’ve made the decision to not participate in the Reading Rush next year. I was just kind of a disappointment, and there will be other readathons out there. So, don’t worry, I will still video some readathons in the future and put them on IGTV. If you are interested in reading *Such a Fun Age* by Kiley Reid and talking about it, The Unfriendly Black Hotties Book Club’s pick for this month is *Such a Fun Age*, so if you want to participate in their live show, then all of the links will be in the show notes and on the blog.

In terms of the books I read this month, all of them were four or five stars, which is incredibly rare for me and also very, very exciting. Some highlights include *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. This was one of the best books I’ve read this year so far. I also read *Clap When You Land* by Elizabeth Acevedo with my friend Bonnie, and we both loved it so much and just gushed about it on the podcast last week. As I mentioned, I also read four books for the Reading Rush, all of which were 4 and 5 stars, but I think my favourite read from that week was the short story *Stories of Your Life* by Ted Chiang. It’s the story that inspired the movie *Arrival*, and I watched *Arrival* a few years ago now, but I really, really loved it. I’m very new to the science fiction alien genre, but I’ve found that I really like movies and books about aliens that are realistic. So, I really loved *Arrival* because it tackled it in a very real way: what would actually happen if aliens came to Earth? It wasn’t a disaster action movie, but almost like a political scientific drama with just like a small speculative element. Something I loved about *Arrival* and *Stories of Your Life* was how it discussed the intersections of science, and maths, and language, and philosophy. I’m not going to talk about it much here, because spoilers, but the concept that’s put forth in the movie is something I’ve kept thinking about since I saw it, and even more so now that I’ve read the book. I highly recommend if you are interested in science fiction, obviously, but also if you are new to science fiction like I am, I think this is a really great place to start because it’s not, um, it’s not overwhelming with, like, sci-fi worldbuilding and all of that. It’s quite real and grounded. All of the books that I mentioned I have talked about other places, um, either on the podcast or on Instagram, so I’ll have links in the show notes to where you can hear me talk more about them.

Also to do with reading, I narrated an audiobook this month, which was super exciting. And, I can now reveal what it is! It’s *Under the Stars: Astrophysics for Bedtime* by Lisa Harvey-Smith. It’s a non-fiction middle-grade book about astrophysics, so our universe, planets, stars, black holes, the milky way, all of that fun stuff. In high school, one of my favourite units was the astronomy unit. Maybe that’s why I also really love stories about aliens? I didn’t continue with physics in my final years of school, but I did do biology, which I absolutely loved. I really love science and making science more accessible to young people, so I was just over the moon – ha ha, pun! – to get the opportunity to narrate this book. It’s not out yet, it’ll be released on the first of September, so mark it in your calendars! Um, but I’ll also be doing a special episode all about what it’s like to narrate an audiobook when it comes out, so you can look forward to that.

This month, I've also been reading a lot of fairy tales, which leads me into a new series I'll be starting on The Community Library, which is all about fairy tales and Disney Princesses. Can you tell I'm excited? I'm so excited. Okay, so the first episode in this series will come out next week, and it's going to be all about *Snow White*. I love Disney Princesses, I love fairy tales, I cannot wait to share this new series with you. And this also leads me into the announcement for the book club pick for this month. In keeping with the theme of fairy tales, I have chosen *Forest of a Thousand Lanterns* by Julie C. Dao. This is an East Asian fantasy reimagining of Snow White, specifically focussing on the character of the Evil Queen. I think it's going to be a great complement to all the discussions we're going to have this month on interpretations of fairy tales. I'll be discussing this on Monday the 31st of August, so you have a whole month to read it! Please read along with me so you can join in on the discussion, it's gonna be so much fun.

I also asked you, the listeners, on Instagram, what you've been loving recently, and so many people are reading so many awesome books! @mvalentinaaguirre is reading the *Percy Jackson* books, and they say it's making them so happy, which is wonderful! I also really like the *Percy Jackson* series – my friend Harry and I actually did a whole series of episodes on the first two books and movies. And we are planning on tackling the third book in the future, but Harry is busy being a very smart boy and going to university. So, in the meantime, I think I'm going to start reading the *Heroes of Olympus* series, which is also set in the *Percy Jackson* universe.

@emmalynnpolaski is re-reading *Dune* by Frank Herbert before the movie comes out. I'm quite excited for the movie, it's got Timothée Chalamet in it, it's got Zendaya in it, I think it's gonna be really cool.

@stonemads just wrote "STEPHEN KING" in all capital letters, which I thought was pretty funny. I'm glad you are loving Stephen King, unfortunately his books are a little too scary for me! But, I don't know, maybe once I'm a grown-up I will read some Stephen King.

@samaraadelgado is reading *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* novels, which is really impressive, because I tried to read *Lord of the Rings*, and it's very long. I actually watched *The Lord of the Rings* movies for the first time just a few months ago. And I watched them with a friend of mine who's a hardcore fan, which was really good, because I kept getting confused about who was who and what was happening, and we kept having to pause, and he had to explain it all to me, but it was really fun. To celebrate, I actually made cupcakes that look like little, um ... hobbit doors. Like, you know the doors that the – where do they live? Like, in the shire? What are they – hobbit holes! And they have those round doors? So I made, like, chocolate cupcakes with green icing for grass, and then a chocolate digestive which is like a – like a chocolate coated biscuit, smooshed on top, with a little yellow m&m as a doorknob. It was pretty cute and also really delicious.

@sarah_morabito is reading *Room* by Emma Donoghue, which I also read and loved. Good on you for reading that book right now in the current, ah, climate! Like, I can't even imagine. I read the book, absolutely loved it, watched the movie, cried my eyes out. I think it's got to be one of the saddest and also one of the most stress-inducing films I've ever seen, so good on you for reading it right now.

@grobe_liz is reading outside, that was so nice to hear! It's quite cold in Melbourne at the moment, but we sometimes get a few sunny days, which is really lovely. I get the morning sun through a big

window in my room, and so sometimes I just sit with my legs in the sun as I reply to emails in the morning, which is so nice, and warms up my little legs.

Next up, I want to talk about what I've been watching. Now, I'm not sure if I've talked about this on the podcast before, but, ah ... I really love *The Bachelor*. Like, *The Bachelor*, *The Bachelorette*, *Bachelor in Paradise*, *Love Island*, all of it, all those trashy shows about people falling in love. And at this point it's not even a guilty pleasure for me, like it's just, truly a pleasure to watch. At the moment, *Australian Bachelor in Paradise* is screening, so I've been watching that. Look, people are often quite ... how do I say this? Taken aback when I mention I really love *The Bachelor*, but here's my justification: basically, it's entertainment that I can watch without having to think about it. Sometimes I find it really hard to turn off my critical eye when I'm consuming media, whether that's reading, or watching a movie, or watching a TV show. Especially since starting this podcast, I've really gotten into the habit of dissecting, like, everything I watch, or listen, or read as I watch it, or listen to it, or read it. So when I watch the *Bachelor*, or basically any other love-based reality TV show, I allow myself to cast away the critical lens. Um, and I can just enjoy the silliness of it and let my brain switch off for a bit, so I've really been enjoying that.

In my family, we've started taking it in turns to choose a movie to watch, which has been absolutely revolutionary. Before, we would actually take, like, half an hour to decide on a movie that we all watched to watch, and by the end, no one would be happy with the choice. So, I'm really loving this new pattern that we've gotten into. Most recently it was my choice, and I chose *Three Identical Strangers*, which is a documentary about triplets who were separated at birth and didn't find out until they were nineteen. I had heard so much about this documentary, um, but it was just added to Aussie Netflix, so I was finally able to watch it. And Bonnie actually mentioned the documentary in our episode about *Clap When You Land*, because we were talking about nature vs. nurture. And I really loved how the documentary dealt with that question, and how they explored those two avenues: is it all nurture, is it all nature? I like how it kind of came to the conclusion – or at least, that's how I interpreted it – that it's clearly a mix of both. One of my favourite things about *Clap When You Land* was seeing the half-sisters interact after meeting for the first time, and it was kind of incredible to almost see a real-life version of that in the documentary, so I highly recommend.

And in terms of what you guys have been watching, @just.isabel.things.podcast says they're loving the show *Derry Girls* on Netflix. I watched season 1 and really enjoyed it, but I never got around to watching season 2, so I must do that. I remember it just being a really fun, light-hearted, funny show.

@_mialucia_ is watching *Gilmore Girls*. In my household, my sister and dad loved *Gilmore Girls*, but my mum and I never really got into it. And I think it's because my mum and I are kind of similar to Lorelei and Rory, and so it just hit a little too close to home! But my sister watched it and loved it.

@shanreads is watching *Hamilton*! I watched *Hamilton*, like, the day it came out Disney+, I was so excited. It was ... ah, look, it was just incredible to see the original cast performing, and it's rekindled my obsession with *Hamilton*, and I've been listening to it on repeat.

@saracastic02 is watching the 1976 version of *Freaky Friday* with Jodie Foster, and I just had to mention this here, because that's actually the version I grew up watching. I didn't see Lindsay Lohan's *Freaky Friday* until I was about fifteen, maybe? So, growing up as a kid, I loved the Jodie

Foster one. And, fun fact, actually: Jodie Foster's haircut in that movie was the inspiration for the haircut I had in *The Nice Guys*, so that movie just has a really special place in my heart.

So, in terms of what I've been listening to ... I mean, I'm sure you can all guess, especially because, when I asked you guys what you've been loving, so many people answered this same thing: Taylor Swift's new album, *folklore*. I have just been obsessed with this album. I love it more and more with every listen. She never ceases to amaze me with her storytelling. Her lyrics are incredible. My three favourites at the moment are *cardigan*, *the last great american dynasty*, and *august*. But *seven*, *exile* and *illicit affairs* are also creeping into my list of favourites. Um, I'm finding that this album is one that is really growing on me. And like, the more I listen to certain songs, the more I find to like about them.

I've also been listening to Melbourne Theatre Company's Audio Lab. Um, so Melbourne Theatre Company has created this thing in lockdown that is basically theatre for your ears, and so the first collection that they released is called *Great Australian Speeches*. So what they did, is they got a selection of theatre actors to recite famous poems and texts and speeches from Australian history. And they're really short, ah, they're ranging from about five minutes to twelve minutes. And I listened to quite a few of them and really enjoyed them, it's just really great, short, educational listening, and it's Aussie, which is really cool. One of my favourites to listen to was Ellen van Neervan's Poems – if you like poetry, definitely give this one a listen, some of the best poems I've read this year. I also really loved Shareena Clanton's piece *The Age of Ignorance is Over*. It's an essay on racism and diversity within the Australian performing arts industry, and Shareena Clanton actually reads it herself, so that's pretty cool. So I'll link both of those that I mentioned in the show notes if you're interested, as well as the whole collection. It's a really interesting collection, it includes a suffragette's open letter to parliament, and a letter from Ned Kelly, which is pretty cool.

And, actually, the day that I am recording this, they've also just released another audio experience, which is a radio play version of *The Turn of the Screw*. I haven't had a chance to listen to it yet, but friend-of-the-podcast and resident-Shakespeare-expert Laurence is in it! So I will have that linked as well if you want to give it a listen and support Laurence.

I want to talk about what I've been eating. I think food is such a joy, and I want to celebrate it. And also, like most people, I have really gotten into baking during lockdown. I have never seen so many pictures of sourdough, and pies, and pastries, and cakes, and slices, and cookies on my Instagram feed. And I was talking to a friend about this recently; about why I think I've fallen in love with baking, and maybe also why so many other have. At the moment, for me, at least, you know, stress and anxiety are just intensified. Like, constantly checking the news, feeling bad about checking the news, feeling bad about not checking the news. And some days I'm just so exhausted with my internal monologue and worries that I just want to, like, switch my brain off. For me, the closest thing I've found to achieving that is baking. Because it's a task that needs my full concentration, but it actually doesn't require me to think about it too hard. I was talking about this on my Instagram recently, about how everything in my life is about words and to do with words, and it's about thinking critically, or analysing, or constructing a story, or writing something. And baking is so different from that. For me, baking is like maths, you know, I'm following a series of steps to get to an end product. And in doing so, my brain focusses on this one thing and blocks out everything else. So it's kind of been really therapeutic, and I've just been baking up a storm, basically! So far my favourite things I've made are raspberry brioche buns, which are surprisingly easier than I thought

they would be. Muesli slice, which is super easy, super quick, and a great favourite in our household, and scones, which are actually harder than you might think. Ah, I've made these many times, trying to perfect my technique! But, in the end, if you eat them straight out of the oven with butter and jam and marmalade, like, they'll taste great no matter what. Oh, and, yes, I will link all the recipes in the show notes for you. I hope you enjoy baking as much as I do!

@joshphillips150 was the only one who responded about a food that they're loving, and they said "Miami style tacos." Now, I'm not sure what makes a taco "Miami style", but it sounds very intriguing.

Finally, I want to talk about what I've been creating. So, a lot of my friends are in the arts, ah, that's their job – and it's my job! You know, whether it's filmmaking, photography, writing, pottery, theatre-making, painting, almost everyone I know has made some form of art into their job. And I recently asked a friend of mine, who's an artist: "Do you create any art for yourself? Without the intention of sharing it?" And my friend said no, and as I thought about it, there is very few art that I create for myself, anymore. Um, a lot of it is to do with work. And I love that, it's exciting, and it's amazing that I've been able to make art into my job, but I also think, especially now, there's this pressure to be creative in lockdown. You know, like: "You've got all this free time! Write that book! Paint that masterpiece! Learn that instrument! Perfect a new skill!" And with that comes a pressure to share what you create.

I've been having a hard time with this, because I'm so used to putting my creativity into my work, you know, whether that's an audition, or this podcast. And in my mind, I have this skewed idea that it's unproductive and not worth it to create art that won't be shared. And social media, I think, adds another level to this. It's almost like, when I sit down to create something, the decision to share it has been made before I've even started, and so I go in with this self-doubt and this pressure to make this thing good enough for the internet. And I think when there's a pressure to share what you create, it can become really limiting, because it cuts off experimentation.

So, recently, I've been trying this new thing where I create art for myself, with absolutely no intent of sharing it. One of my favourite YouTubers, Leena Norms, is doing "creative lock-in" livestreams on Instagram. At beginning of the stream, she reads the audience a poem and gives us a prompt based on that poem, and then we write for twenty minutes. And there are no rules to this – you can follow the prompt, or not. You can write poetry, or not. It's just about setting aside some time to be in a creative environment with other people. So, I participated in all of these lives, and wrote at least one poem every time with the intention of not sharing it. It was a great feeling, to just allow myself to be free of all expectation. And the result? Well, I wrote some really, really shit poetry. And that's okay! I noticed that, when I was writing, there would always be a point, kind of halfway through, where I'd be like: "I should just stop writing it now, it's so bad, I hate it. Anyone who reads this will see that it's absolutely terrible." But at that point, I'd have to tell myself: "No, keep going. It doesn't have to be good, because no one else is gonna see it but you." You know, what do you have to lose by writing bad poetry that no one will read? And so I finished writing my bad poetry, and I'm oddly proud of it. If you want to participate in Leena's creative lock-ins, I think by the time this episode comes out they'll be done, but they will all be saved to her IGTV, which I'll link in the show notes, and she's also going to release it as a YouTube video, which I will also link if it's out by this time. So, check it out, if you want to! Ah, create something, and don't feel any pressure to share it.

So many people who responded to my story told me about the things they've been creating. @lara.g.s.d is growing basil plants, which is just so wonderful! I am not a great plant mother, but I have an orchid which is in bloom at the moment, so I am really enjoying that.

@atchulia is knitting! Me too! I just finished a pair of socks for my friend, and I'm now going to start on my *Outlander* shawl. Wish me luck! I'm very nervous.

@cyrus.the.traveler says they finally saw their dog again after 5 months of quarantine, which was so heart-warming to hear. And, Cyrus the Traveler has also started playing piano, which is very impressive! I tried that for a bit, but I have to admit I did give up pretty quickly. My mum is much better at playing piano than me.

Possibly the most interesting and intriguing response I got was from @cedricjairuscastaneda, who says they're doing 3D modelling! And I wonder what exactly this entails, like if it's 3D printing, or modelling with oven-bake clay, or plasticine, or maybe even pottery? Whatever it is, it sounds amazing and I'm glad you're having fun doing it.

Thank you very much to everyone who sent in messages of what they've been loving this month. Even if I didn't mention yours here, I did read them all, and it was just so lovely to see all of these positive things that people are enjoying. I hope you're all doing well, staying safe and healthy, and washing your hands and wearing masks, and also reading good books! I'm sending good vibes your way, all the way from Melbourne, Australia, but if you're having a bad day and not feeling your best, that's okay, too. We're all just taking it one day at a time.

[slow guitar theme music]

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[theme music fades out]