

## 4.6 – A Very Casual Chat with my Sister, Kalliope

**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.

[fade in: plucky theme music with violins, clarinet, piano, and twinkly triangle]

**Angourie [host]**

Hello and welcome back to The Community Library: a podcast and book club for anyone interested in stories, and how and why we tell them. I'm your host, Angourie Rice.

**Kalliope [guest]**

I'm eating noodles!

**Angourie [host]**

That's my sister, Kalliope.

[fade out: theme music]

**Angourie [host]**

Welcome back to the podcast, Kalliope, you know you are everyone's favourite guest? And I've brought you on today because the episode that was scheduled to go up isn't ready yet. So, as you said, you are a last resort.

**Kalliope [guest]**

I get no respect.

**Angourie [host]**

Ah, what are you having for lunch, Kalliope?

**Kalliope [guest]**

I have made the most magnificent noodles with a sunny side up egg on it, and carrot, and spring onions, and it's really good and professional and fun.

**Angourie**

I watched her make it, it was really good. It looks delicious, I hope you can't hear her chewing. So, Kalliope, to start off with, something I ask all my guests, either at the tail end or the beginning of the episode, but today I'm going to do it at the beginning: What are you currently reading, if anything?

**Kalliope**

I'm reading a book called *A Long Way From Verona*. Can you look up who it's by?

**Angourie**

It's by Jane Gardam.

**Kalliope**

I am really enjoying it, it's about a ... round about fourteen-year-old girl who wants to be a writer, and, yes – is a writer, and she's a bit different from everyone else, and it's set during World War II. But that's not really the main focus of the story. It's her – it's a book written by the protagonist, is the idea, that she is writing it. It's similar vein to *Claudine at School*, by ...

**Angourie**

Colette.

**Kalliope**

Yes.

**Angourie**

And are you enjoying it? Before you take another bite of your noodles.

**Kalliope**

Yes, I am enjoying it very much.

**Angourie**

Cool! What am I reading at the moment? Ah, I'm reading – not that anyone asked – five books at the moment. I know, it's a bit much, I'm struggling a little bit. I'm reading *Mrs Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf. I'm reading twenty pages of that a day cos it's really hard. I'm also reading *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë, which is great but also difficult. I'm reading *The Strays* by Emily Bitto, that's an Australian contemporary book that won an Australian women's fiction prize. It's pretty good so far, I'm not really far in. It's about art, which is really cool, and it's set in Melbourne, which is awesome. Yeah, it's fun to read about places that you know. I'm also reading *The House of Hades* by Rick Riordan, that's the fourth book in the *Heroes of Olympus* series, it's so good but so stressful. And then finally I'm reading a graphic novel called *Today is the Last Day of the Rest of Your Life* by Ulli Lust. It's a German graphic novel, when I picked it up I didn't realise that it was German. And I'm reading that for the episode that you will hear in a week's time, about me reading graphic novels. So there's a lot there. I think my favourite read right now is *The House of Hades*, just cos it's so fun and light and adventurous, I'm really enjoying that.

So, Kalliope, you're in year twelve at the moment. How's that going?

**Kalliope**

Kicking my butt. [laughs] It's – it's alright. It's going average.

**Angourie**

For those, I guess, American listeners or British listeners, year twelve is the final year of school. Basically, your entire life has led up to this moment, Kalliope. [laughs]

**Kalliope**

Yeah, right.

**Angourie**

What books are you studying at the moment, in English? When I came in to ask you to do this episode, like half an hour ago, you were writing an English essay.

**Kalliope**

Yes. Slowly but surely. Um, we are currently studying *The Lieutenant* by Kate Grenville, which is an Australian novel, it's historical fiction, it's about the first fleet, and it's based off real figures. I am sort of enjoying it. I think it's a good one to study, just because the themes are very explicit and it's sort of easy to find them. There's a little bit of controversy about it because it is written by a white woman and it includes a lot about – it's about a coloniser's sort of relationship with the Indigenous people, and it can definitely come off as white saviour. But I still think it is done quite well. But yeah, it's just a shame – it's good that we're reading about Indigenous Australians, it's just a shame that it has to be from the perspective of the colonisers.

**Angourie**

Is that a discussion that's happening at school when you're studying it? Like, is that something people are writing essays about or talking about in class, or not really?

**Kalliope**

Not writing essays about, because you don't study – in our curriculum you don't look at anything outside the world of the book, it's entirely looking at the themes in the book, and you can't write about Grenville's interpretation, or any sort of ... the place it has in society at all. Because of that, we haven't really talked about it in class. I mean, it's been brought up, um, it's not really the focus of the study.

**Angourie**

That was one of my favourite parts about literature class, rather than English class, cos in literature it's actually – it's all about the context, and looking at the context in which the work was written and how that informs the way you interpret a book. Is that something you would be interested in? Like, do you wish that you could write about that in your essays?

**Kalliope**

Not really. I'm not very ... I like talking about things like that, but I'm not interested in sort of analysing that and studying it. English in Australia is compulsory – it's the only compulsory subject in Victoria, and that's why I'm doing it. If it wasn't compulsory, I probably wouldn't be studying it.

**Angourie**

But you like reading in your downtime, and you like talking about books in your down time. With me, at least. Sometimes.

**Kalliope**

Yeah, that's when I don't have to use words like 'thus', and 'explicates', or whatever, or 'pathetic fallacy', and bleugh.

**Angourie**

Is it 'pathetic' fallacy or 'prophetic' fallacy?

**Kalliope**

[I] have been told it's pathetic fallacy.

**Angourie**

I thought it was 'prophetic' ... I couldn't give you the definition of either. Give me the definition of pathetic fallacy.

**Kalliope**

It's like the description of the surroundings and the environment creating the atmosphere. And it often – at least, in the book we're reading – it often mirrors, sort of, provides context for the feelings of the protagonist.

**Angourie**

Mm, cool! And so how is pathetic fallacy used in *The Lieutenant*, or 'The Left-Tenant' as it is correctly said in British English.

**Kalliope**

Um – [chewing noises] – one second.

**Angourie**

Noodle time. You've made my whole room smell like sweet chilli sauce and fried egg.

**Kalliope**

It's amazing.

**Angourie**

I'm gonna burn a scented candle after this.

**Kalliope**

Um, what was the question? Oh, um – because it's set in Australia, it's very centred around nature and also the protagonist is very interested – like, he's an astronomer?

**Angourie**

An astronomer? Someone who looks at the stars?

**Kalliope**

Yes, an astronomer, and is very interested in science and nature, and he's, you know, sitting very isolated in newly colonised New South Wales, so he's very much interacting with the world around him. And also the Indigenous people, who, obviously the setting is very important to them.

**Angourie**

And so with *The Lieutenant*, are you going to, is it just analysis unit? Or do you have to compare it with something, or do you have to write a creative response? Like, what's assessment for this book?

**Kalliope**

An analysis of the themes. So we have our SAC – SAC is the School Assessed Coursework, so that's whatever is being assessed on that topic, so that's next Friday. Just an essay in fifty minutes.

**Angourie**

In fifty minutes? Just a single period, you have to write the whole essay by hand?

**Kalliope**

Oh, must be a double. It must be a double – a hundred minutes. An essay – a handwritten essay in a hundred minutes with no references. We'll find out the topic on the day, but it's been stuff – so far it's been stuff on knowledge and learning, obedience and personal values, and then conflict and violence, so stuff like that.

**Angourie**

And how do you find the – I guess, the format of the curriculum, like the way it works, building up to writing an essay in a hundred minutes, by hand, with no references, no notes, no quotes on hand, you have to remember it? Like, how do you find that set up? Are you dreading it, do you kinda like it?

**Kalliope**

I don't like it. I think, like, the things we've been doing in class does set us up for that, but it just feels like I'm sitting in an English class learning how to write an essay handwritten in a hundred minutes, which doesn't seem – and then, you know, that is preparing for when we have to handwrite three essays in three hours at the end of exams, and that's giving us our ATAR [editor's note: ATAR stands for Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank, and is a score out of 100 that students receive based on their performance in exams. This score is what universities look at when taking applications.] But like it's not actually comparable to anything in our life. Like, it feels like we're setting up well for this SAC, which will set up well for the exam, which I guess maybe if you were studying literature in university it might set up well for? But, you know, how many people are going to go on to study literature, and are we really gonna use that same format?

**Angourie**

Yes, when I went through the English curriculum I felt very much that – at least in English class rather than literature – it was about ... it wasn't really about analysing the text, it was about learning how to write an essay by hand in a hour. Which – I didn't end up doing my exams, and thank god I didn't, because, like, writing three essays by hand in three hours just sounds like torture. And it's not really testing your ability to analyse, it's testing your ability to memorise the essays that you practiced the week before, and copy them out.

**Kalliope**

Like, the teachers give us the themes, and they provide analyses of them ...

**Angourie**

Analyses? Analyses, yeah.

**Kalliope**

They provide analyses of these things, and we remember those things and then we remember the quotes that are relevant to them, and then we just have a bank in our mind of all of the possible questions that the essay topic could be on, and that's what we're spitting out because we've done, you know, ten practice exams leading up to it. So it doesn't, at that point – the class discussions maybe at the beginning are sort of testing our knowledge of the book, but other than that it's really not.

**Angourie**

The thing that I took away from studying English in high school wasn't – well, no I do think I took away how to write an essay, and I think constructing an essay with evidence, with interpretations and evidence to back up your interpretations, I think that has helped me not only with the podcast, but also with my job. Like, in acting, learning how to understand and break down a script or a character, and determine the themes and the story arc. Like, I think that's really helpful for my job, personally, but I also think it's a great skill to have. It's the skill of interpreting information and understanding it, and then communicating your feelings about it. The thing is, though, as you said, in the discussions about the book at the beginning of the unit, that's where you're flexing those muscles, that's where you're learning to interpret something and communicate that back. Whereas, I don't think the exam tests your interpretation, or tests your ability to understand a text. Which I think is a shame, cos I think that's the valuable thing that can be applied to any field and to – and I think that's the most helpful thing when you go out in the world.

**Kalliope**

I agree.

**Angourie**

Okay, so in positives, moving away from school, what have been your favourite ... some of your favourite, like, books, movies, TV shows, music that you've consumed this year so far.

**Kalliope**

I've watched lots of movies this year, I have not read that many books, just because of school. Yeah, just *A Long Way from Verona*.

**Angourie**

Oh, well, we read, um ... can do a subtle plug, here – we read *Five Little Pigs* by Agatha Christie, together, and filmed it for IGTV.

**Kalliope**

Movies I have enjoyed ... we watched a movie called *Cynthia* from 1947 with Elizabeth Taylor, and I loved it, it was so fun. It's a coming-of-age story about Elizabeth Taylor who is a sickly girl. And it's really fun.

**Angourie**

A very young Elizabeth Taylor, like sixteen Elizabeth Taylor or something, like ... Well that's good that you enjoyed that. Any other movies? Oh, we watched *Camp Rock* the other night. [laughs]

**Kalliope**

Stop exposing us! We also watched *Now and Then*, 1995 with Christina Ricci and Demi Moore, and that was really fun, I really liked it! It was like *Stand By Me* but with women, which is always nice. Like, I feel like, for some reason, that genre, like 80s / 90s kids' movies –

**Angourie**

Or like, movies about kids coming of age –

**Kalliope**

Yeah, coming-of-age stories are always about boys, and that kinda sucks, so I really enjoyed *Now and Then*. It got a bit preachy at the end, which was a bit disappointing. There was a lot of, you know, voice over, which is never a good thing. Other than that, that was really good.

**Angourie**

I really enjoyed that one, too. I thought Christina Ricci was so good in it, and she was like, fifteen or something, she was fantastic. And TV shows – we've actually just finished watching two series as a family.

**Kalliope**

We finished *What We Do in the Shadows*, the US TV – television series. I have not seen the movie, but our mum has. Anyway, we started watching the TV show together as a family and loved it. It is very funny.

**Angourie**

It's about vampires. Hence why I love it. I think that's filled the *Twilight* hole in my heart. But now that I've finished watching it, like, what do I watch now? I want more vampire content.

**Kalliope**

We've been – running theme has been dead people. So then we watched *Ghosts*, the ...

**Angourie**

Isn't it BBC?

**Kalliope**

I don't think so. I feel like it's ... is it? Is everything British BBC?

**Angourie**

Yes.

**Kalliope**

It is BBC – [laughs] – it's BBC One. The creators of *Horrible Histories* have come to do comedy on ghosts, and they play – they all play ghosts.

**Angourie**

Yeah, so it's about a couple who inherits a family mansion, and they go to live there to fix it up or turn it into a wedding venue or a hotel or something, and the woman in the couple starts seeing ghosts. And yes, they all play ghosts from different eras, so you've got a ghost from – a ghost of a politician from the 80s, you've got a ghost from a World War II officer, you've got a ghost of a

woman who was burnt at the stake in the witch trials, and it's really funny. And like, if you grew up in Australia or England, you probably know *Horrible Histories*, it's like a – like a sketch, a kids' sketch variety show that teaches kids about history –

**Kalliope**

What you don't – what they don't teach you in school, specifically.

**Angourie**

Yeah, cos it's all, like, the gross stuff. Yeah, so we loved that growing up cos it's just all about the gross parts of history, and they have funny songs, and ... and it's hosted by a rat. Like, a puppet that's a rat. It's weird [laughs] but it's really great! Anyway, so it's the same team, so we really enjoyed that. There are two seasons of that, and we just finished the second one, but they've got a third one coming out, which is exciting. Yes, more movies, Kalliope?

**Kalliope**

Yes. Together, we watched that movie ... that we watched ... like ...

**Angourie**

What – what movie? What are you talking about? *The Lizzie McGuire Movie*?

**Kalliope**

No!

**Angourie**

We did watch *The Lizzie McGuire Movie*, though. I don't know what movie we watched on the weekend.

**Kalliope**

... Dempsey.

**Angourie**

Oh my god, with Patrick Dempsey! That one! Oh, yes!

**Kalliope**

*Can't Buy Me Love*.

**Angourie**

Vintage Patrick Dempsey, like one of his first credits. 1987? It's an 80s rom-com. It was ... interesting. Kalliope loved it.

**Kalliope**

I thought it was great. Patrick Dempsey is so young in it, he's so cute, and it was just so full-on 80s, and it as well, you know, as 80s teen rom-coms do, got a bit preachy. Classic stand up in front of the whole school and give a speech about bullying. Also, okay, is it just me, or who – like Hollywood constructed this idea of high school where like, it's all these rich people, and then anyone else is like, full-on bullied. I mean, I don't know if I was just shielded from that at our hippie school, but



like, is that a thing? In America, is it like, in one school you have the popular kids that like, all sit at one table, and like everyone else is complete, like, scum?

**Angourie**

It's that same, like *Mean Girls* thing. I mean, yeah, I don't know. We'd have to ask some Americans. But maybe it just differs from school to school.

**Kalliope**

So that you can understand what I mean, this was a quote from the speech: 'Nerds, jocks, my side, your side, it's all bullshit! It's hard enough just trying to be yourself!'

**Angourie**

Yeah ... [laughs]

**Kalliope**

But, other than that, I thought it was really good, I thought it was really funny and cute and just, wholesome rom-com.

**Angourie**

So, it's about Patrick Dempsey, teenage boy, he's a nerd, he's saving up to buy a telescope, but he decides to use his money to pay the most popular girl in school, who he has a crush on, to be his girlfriend for like, three weeks, so that he can be popular. And she takes the money because she spilt barbecue sauce on her mum's nice white suede jacket that she stole without her mum knowing, and to buy a replacement it costs a thousand dollars. And so she takes Patrick Dempsey's money, and they pretend to be together for three weeks. Hilarity ensues. It was so – like, the style was so aggressively 80s that it looked like a parody. It was like, full-on huge hair, huge shoulder pads, there was one cheerleading scene where the cheerleaders were literally wearing those, like, ridiculously high leotards with tights and legwarmers. It was pretty ridiculous. But the fashion was great.

**Kalliope**

Oh my god, and we finished *Call My Agent!* That was so, like tragic!

**Angourie**

So, our favourite show – well, it's me – it's – my dad doesn't like it, he finds it too stressful. But my mum, Kalliope and I, our favourite show is a French Netflix show called *Call My Agent* in English, in French it's called *Dix Pourcent*, which means 'Ten Percent'. And it's about a team of talent agents who manage their actor clients in Paris. And it's brilliant, there are four seasons, the fourth season is the last one, and we finished it, and it was so sad, I was on the verge of tears, it was – but it was so good! If you want a good comedy-drama, don't let the subtitles put you off, it is such a brilliant show.

**Kalliope**

Yeah, it's really, really good. And I am actually gonna move to Paris and become an agent, so ... I don't speak any French, but like, that shouldn't be problem.

**Angourie**

No, it shouldn't be an issue. It worked for *Emily in Paris*. Okay, so is that it? Is that everything? We've been talking for a while. Thank you very much for listening. As always, you can follow me @the\_community\_library on Instagram. You cannot have Kalliope's Instagram, it is private and she doesn't want anyone following her.

**Kalliope**

Wait, no no no – my Instagram handle is tomholland2013, if you'd like to go follow me there.

**Angourie**

[laughs] Um, Kalliope's Instagram is actually beam\_me\_up\_softboi if you want to go and follow that.

**Kalliope**

It's just screenshots of me messaging girls.

**Angourie**

[laughs] Um, and then you can follow me @vancityreynolds. [laughs]

[fade in: plucky theme music with violins, clarinet, piano, and twinkly triangle]

**Angourie**

Thank you so much for listening, I'll chat to you next week. Have a good one, bye!

**Kalliope**

Byeeee!

**Angourie**

That was so loud.

[fade out: theme music]