

My Dog Ate My Book Report

Episode One Transcript

All grammatical hiccups and repeated words are, to the best of my editing this document ability, errors that exist in the audio of the episode because we are messy speakers. -Wren

(Music comes in: snippet from Valley of the Drakes, licensed from Epidemic Sound)

Wren

Welcome to my dog ate my book report, a podcast where two weirdo 30-somethings take turns introducing each other to a formative book from childhood the other has never read to see if the magic holds up! I am Wren (they/he), and I'm probably more of a Leatherman or Swiss Army knife, as opposed to a hatchet, though I can see the use.

Brandon

And I'm Brandon (he/him) and I don't know, I'm like a glow in the dark compass probably.

Wren

(laughter) That would be almost useless in this situation.

Brandon

Yup. That's correct.

Wren

Oh no... And today we are going to be discussing the book "Hatchet" by Gary Paulsen. This is a me pick week which means I have read Hatchet and Brandon has not. This episode will have many, many spoilers for the book Hatchet and if you have not read it and are considering doing so and don't want to be spoiled... (long pause) sorry.

Brandon

(laughter) So... yeah. If you haven't read Hatchet, well give us like the the short blurb. What's the book about?

Wren

Alright, Hatchet is a 1986 adventure novel for young adults about a boy named Brian who finds himself stranded in the Canadian wilderness after a plane crash. The book touches on Brian's struggle with basic survival, finding the will to keep trying to survive and an internal anguish over his parents divorce and the secret of his mother's infidelity that he carried with him. There are a few content warnings for this book: self harm and suicidal ideation. So if a brief mention of that is going to trouble you, I advise not to read the book.

Brandon

Yes, so we will now give you I don't know 10 seconds to go read the book. Now before we spoil anything further. I'm gonna start counting 10...9... hope you're fast readers. 654321. Okay.

Wren

(Transition sparkle noise) Yeah, so the first time I read this book, I'm estimating that it was fifth grade because I have strong associations of it with this reading for pizza program. There was, you read a certain amount of books and you get a personal pan pizza from Pizza Hut.

Brandon

Yeah, it wasn't called reading for pizza. I'm gonna call it reading for pizza though, I like that. Yeah. Tell us what was called if you know the answer, audience.

Wren

Yes. I definitely was not a hugely voracious reader before this pizza program. So I'm going to consider myself a pizza program success story because I was poor. And I really wanted fancy pizza. And to me Pizza Hut was fancy fancy pizza. So I read as many books as I could. And then I realized I liked reading. So, go you, Pizza Hut.

Brandon

And you liked pizza I imagine.

Wren

I did, I always got a little personal mushroom pizza. It was the best. (transition sparkle noise) So I'm pretty sure that I read this book around fifth grade is when I'm going to put it, which puts me around nine years old, which yes, I know is a little young for fifth grade. Don't worry about it. I was a weird kid. In terms of how, like my memory of it affecting me as a child was that it made me into a little bit of a disaster prepper. I had a number of situations after I read this book that I felt like I was ready for. I grew up in Maine. And this was before a lot of climate change stuff. So I had never seen a tornado but I was very afraid of them. And I had a plan for where I would go. In Maine. If there was a tornado. And a plan for a fire and a plan for you know a survival situation. It turned me into a little disaster prepper, is my strongest takeaway from from this book.

Brandon

Did, did you ever have to deal with a disaster for which you prepped?

Wren

Oh, not ever, not once. (transition sparkle noises) So, I have now reread this book. And Brandon has read it for the first time, so I'm interested to know what you thought.

Brandon

I liked it.

Wren

Oh good.

Brandon

Thanks for listening to our podcast. (Laughter) No, I enjoyed it. It went places I wasn't expecting it to given its like, theoretical like reading level and everything. It certainly got more serious at certain points than I anticipated. Yeah, because like beginning with a plane crash or a heart attack followed by a plane crash is yeah, like not necessarily what I expected to happen in the first chapter of a book for sort of this age group, but I thought it was a really, really engaging single character story, right? There's very few characters functionally, in most of the book, even relative to like, something like "my side of the mountain" where like, yeah, the kids by himself a lot, but he like makes animal friends who are kind of characters. Like they don't talk or anything like it's not fantasy still, but like, their presence is that at a certain consistency, and that's not as much a part of Hatchet as I was expecting it to be, but yeah, I thought it was pretty cool.

Wren

Do you think you would have enjoyed it if you read it as a kid?

Brandon

Probably? But I don't think I would have opted to read it as a kid, if I were given the choice. Like wilderness survival sort of stuff was generally not my genre. For example, my side of the mountain is a book that I only read because I had to in school, right. And I really liked that book, but like, it was definitely not a book that I chose to read. So I think just because of like the genre tastes I had, I probably wouldn't necessarily have, like, picked it out at a bookstore or from the library. But if I had done that, or if I had had it assigned in school or something, I don't think I would have been like upset, I think I would have counted it as a book that I enjoyed reading. Maybe surprisingly so, right.

Wren

It wasn't, it wasn't assigned, but it was on the list of book options. And I gravitated towards it because around this same time was when they were hanging up, "please come join the Boy Scouts" flyers in my school. And I was obviously not allowed to join the Boy Scouts. And I was deeply upset by this. Because the Boy Scouts at least in the section of the country that I grew up, the Boy Scouts got to do really cool things like learn how to build a fire and go camping and learn how to tie knots and do survival stuff. Where the little flyer for the... (exasperated mid thought transition noise) I can picture the flyers right now. They were even color coded. Like the Boy Scout, one was on green paper and Girl Scout one was on pink paper. And the Girl Scout one was advertised as "learn how to bake and make friends."

Brandon

And sell cookies in front of Kroger.

Wren

I didn't want to learn to bake or make friends. I wanted to learn how to go to the woods.

Brandon

You were specifically not here to make friends.

Wren

Unless it's a bird. Anyway. So yeah, so I definitely gravitated towards the survival book because I had this just upsetness... upsetness that's not even a word. I was upset about the Boy Scouts.

Brandon

Yeah, I was not technically a Boy Scout I suppose, I was a Cub Scout. The Cub Scouts is like boy scouts for like, certainly kindergarteners but like if you're like six or seven maybe you're not quite Boy Scout ready yet. I was not an outdoorsy kid.

Wren

(Transition noise)

So going into this book, again, I tried to before I started the book, I tried to remember just like what I could about it. And the things that stuck out the strongest to me was that I remembered the sort of fun innovative parts. I remember when he discovered the water refraction, and how to spear the fish. I remember how he started the fire. I didn't remember the divorce or the, you know, moments of darkness.

Brandon

Yeah.

Wren

I remember this book making me so optimistic. It made me think that I could survive in that situation and reading it again, I think I would be dead.

Brandon

I genuinely believe that I think my biggest problem in a survival situation is that I think I would feel too bad to kill animals, at least certain kinds of animals. I think I would genuinely just like, try to find another way and die of starvation.

Wren

Yeah, I'd be good with the berries. And then I would struggle.

Brandon

Yeah. I wouldn't mind killing fish. But I think I would, I don't think I would figure out how to catch fish. I have been fishing a couple times in my entire life and don't know how to do it with a rod and bait and everything. I don't think I would ever really figure out how to effectively catch fish without any tools to begin with. How many times would you say you've read Hatchet prior to this? Like, is this a you read it one time, is it you read it every year of your life?

Wren

I definitely read it a couple times as a kid. I know that I checked it out of the library a few times. I know that I reread it. I want to say ten or so years ago because I was getting ready to go on my first real adult vacation to Florida. And everyone was talking about how you need to pack beach reads and plane

reads. I don't know what a beach read or a plane read is. But I went to the bookstore. And for some reason, maybe Brian Paulson had a new book out at that point. But there was a display of his stuff. And I was like, oh, gosh, it's been so long since I read Hatchet. I'm going to read Hatchet on the plane to be ironic. And that was the point when I discovered the sequels. But we will get into that.

Brandon

Ok. You won't believe.

Wren

I, I just for some reason I was so I was so scared of getting on a plane. And I do kind of wonder if this book instilled that fear in me.

Brandon

Did it like ruin planes for you?

Wren

But I was so scared of getting on the plane that I thought that it would just be sort of like hopeful irony or whatever that I'm choosing to read on this plane. This book about a boy getting in a plane crash. Yeah. If I'm reading a book about a plane crash on this plane, it can't crash. That would just be too coincidental. Fate won't do that to me.

Brandon

Yeah. Well, at least at least it was like an airliner, I assume instead of a Cessna.

Wren

Yeah. It's important to note, yeah, in this book, the plane that crashes is just this little skippy plane thing.

Brandon

Yeah. Like I was, I was a little bit like, you know, this happens a lot reading books about kids from prior to my own childhood. Because, you know, growing up mainly in the mainly in the 90s. I was born in the 80s. But, you know, like, I grew up in an environment where kind of, it wasn't as like, broadly accepted that kids could just like run around and do stuff by themselves, etc. Like, we, for instance, weren't allowed by our school system to walk to school, even if we were in walking distance, because of like, concern about what happened, what what could happen if like, all these kids was walking to school, every day or whatnot, you know, and then you read like books from the 50s and 60s and 70s, and so on. And like, it seems like kids are just able to go do whatever they care to, right? And so they're kind of a cultural divide, I suppose in like the parenting scares of like the 80s, creating the overly protective kind of 90s suburban life that I lived. But I was like, is this a thing? Do people get their kid like a charter plane with one dude a lot. Like, was that a thing?

Wren

I don't know. That never struck me as odd for some reason. I think it just everything that was out of the realm of what would be normal for me. I just assumed was a people with more money than my family had thing.

Brandon

Yeah.

Wren

Like that's normal for I guess, rich people or something.

Brandon

Yeah, I don't know. Like, it did. It did briefly strike me as like, Wait, like, how did this? How did this plane situation gets set up? Does Brian's dad know, this dude, the pilot?

Wren

He could of? They didn't really...

Brandon

Yeah, yeah. It's just not really explained.

Wren

You know, because the whole thing is told from this kid's perspective. And he, the whole time he's boarding this plane, he's mostly just thinking about how angry he is with his mother and how like, just sort of like grumble grumble, I'm going to the Canadian wilderness for the summer. I'm just, I'm just New York City kid. Grumble, grumble. And so you know, in his grumbling, he could have just completely glossed over the fact like certain facts, like if the pilot knew his father, and this was just like a faver or something.

Brandon

Yeah.

Wren

Those things are irrelevant to his experience that he's that we're seeing this story through. So we just don't get to know.

Brandon

Yeah, he's very focused on the problems he was having in his life at the time, and not on the possibility and this is fair, I wouldn't be dwelling on this either. He wasn't worried about the possibly the pilot might have a heart attack in the air and die, leaving him to deal with the plane.

Wren

This pilot might have a heart attack and die, I should make sure that I get to know his next of kin and whether or not he knows my dad.

Brandon

Yeah, exactly.

Wren

But speaking of the parents, one of the notes I wrote is that I, I found it just really fascinating that in this book about wilderness survival, one of Brian's main struggles is with this anguish over his parents divorce, and how that was still in the forefront of his mind, even in a survival situation, which I thought was just really, I thought it kind of came from a place of honesty from the author. And obviously, that's not something I thought about when I was younger. But, you know, if you, you know, get depressed sometimes and you, you know, it manifests in so many different ways. But, like on a small scale, sometimes you forget to eat, because you're, you know, thinking about other stuff, you know? So, I don't know, I just thought that it was, you know, it could have been a very simple book about a boy and a hatchet and a plane crash. But there was this other element, which just made it feel a lot more real. And, and I know that I personally read it before my parents got divorced, because they got divorced when I was around 11. But I'm sure some of the parts about you know, his parents arguing and such resonated with me. (Transition sparkle noises) What didn't you think of? So okay. I not only do Brandon and I have a very different upbringing situation. You know, he was raised in suburban Virginia, I was raised in very rural Maine, we also have very different educational backgrounds and careers. So my very sciency training as an adult, sciency training, that's the official term.

Brandon

Yeah.

Wren

It gave me this lens of reading it this time where I started being very critical of whether or not Gary Paulsen had done his research. So I'm sitting there, as soon as the snapping turtle comes up and lays its eggs I immediately started taking notes. Is raspberry growth season in Canada, the same as snapping turtle laying season in Canada. I doubt it. And then I then I went and looked it up. And they are the same time. He did his research. He did a lot of research for this. So.

Brandon

See, the thing that the snapping turtle made me think about was that I just really don't know very much about eggs, at all.

Wren

Yeah, was there anything else that really surprised you? Or actually tell me more about what you didn't know about eggs?

Brandon

Yeah, I guess I guess it had, like, the main thing in that case was the notion that the book says that they're pretty much kind of like chicken eggs as far as once he gets into the shell, right? Like there, the outside is different. And I was just like, it never occurred to me that that would be a thing. I don't know why in my brain chicken eggs work one way and every other egg in the animal kingdom works a different way. And then I started to like, wonder if there is a similar sort of situation where like the turtles have to lay eggs at a certain point, regardless whether the fertilized or not, or when I just don't know about eggs. I just don't.

Wren

I did like the detail about the texture of the shell and such. I personally was just so curious why he didn't stick the egg on top of the fire. And just hard boil it in its own shell. That did seem like an oversight instead of just because what Brian ends up doing is just basically sucking the raw egg out of the shell. And because he didn't have any cooking implements, it's important to note the reason this book is called Hatchet is because the only tool Brian had was a hatchet like this little Boy Scout hatchet sort of thing that he had belted on.

Brandon

Yeah, that's serendipitously his mother had given him.

Wren

Well, it, it obviously, is kind of a stretch, but also kind of realistic. You know, you're sending your kid off to the Canadian wilderness. And so you give them this little, you know, tool thing. It's cute. It's like, you know, like a Leatherman or something, you know.

Brandon

They wouldn't have let him on a plane with with that thing today.

Wren

That's fair. (Transition noises) I was very excited going into the book, because I couldn't remember what he first finds to eat. And I with the knowledge I have now I was like, oh, I wonder if you know, he notices a deer eating bark or something. Because like, there's information I have now, that actually might make it more realistic that I might survive. But yeah, in terms of what would be viable, because he does mention birch trees, because he uses the birch bark to cut up little slivers of papery, firestarter stuff. And when you have Birches, you have this whole gateway to Birch beer, you obviously don't have sugar. But yeah. I did find it interesting that basically, Brian did no digging for roots of anything at all, there were there was no no tuber action here. And that's where a lot of a lot of nutrition might come.

Brandon

Yeah, I guess, like one of the things that surprised me about the book as a whole. And like Brian's journey as a whole was that he, he doesn't really build up anything really, like I've read, I read a lot of books over the years that follow the sort of roughing it to some degree pattern, whether it's things like my side of the mountain, or whether it's like, Swiss Family Robinson, et cetera. And like, one of the tropes of those books is often the characters, like progressively sort of building up their homestead or whatever equivalent it is. So not just the initial like shelter from outside and so forth, but also like, constructing in some fashion, sort of replenishable food stores, often, which comes with like learning how to grow some stuff nearby, so they have a small garden, or I guess Brian does learn to sort of fence in some of the fish.

Wren

Yeah, he does that. And he, he makes his food shelf.

Brandon

Yeah. But yeah, he kind of stops at, you know, shelter from the rain, and shelf for food, and then just focuses on like, building up his tools and skills, and then spent a lot of his time hunting food day to day.

Wren

For a good chunk of the book he was just focused on surviving day to day because he knew that the next day might be the day that they find him. So he wasn't in this situation, like okay, I guess this is my life now, I need to make sure that it's a good one. It's just I need to keep going just one more day, then they're gonna find me one more day, then they're gonna find me. And then he you know, he he does reach a point where he's like, I don't know, when they're gonna find me. I need to start being a little bit more, you know, thinking more about my future. I do feel like maybe that was part of why I thought the ending was so abrupt. Because, you know, by that point, I was so fascinated with his problem solving and all of the descriptions of events. And the moose was just great, that when the pilot of the secondary sort of rescue ship, just swoops down to save him. It was almost a disappointment. I know that it was great for Brian to get rescued. Go him. But I was like, wait, I want to know more about how to survive in the woods.

Brandon

Yeah. I mean, it feels like it's it's kind of intentional irony, almost, right? Because that's, that happens right after he does finally get the survival kit from the plane, which has all sorts of things that will make his life way easier than it has been. But in retrieving the survival kit, he he switches on the emergency transmitter and then gets rescued pretty fast. So like, there's this this period of elation that he has, like all of this, like freeze dried food, that he can, that he can eat for a while without having to necessarily worry about always hunting every meal and various other tools that will be useful for lighting his fire more easily and doing other things and, and then just like, he's finally gotten all these resources that he's not had and then somebody shows up and it's like, it's over now.

Wren

Yeah, like he like he pulls a gun out of the pack. And he's just like, Oh, but I already made a bow and arrow. I don't know if I need this.

Brandon

Yeah, and like especially. It's interesting, because that comes at the after sort of being pushed to the edge quite a bit by the tornado.

Wren

Right. The tornado had just wrecked all of his stuff.

Brandon

Yeah, because access accessing the plane was only possible because of the tornado.

Wren

Right, because they the plane had crashed in the lake, and it sank. And then when the tornado blew through, he could see the the end of the tail of the plane again.

Brandon

Yeah. So like he he had gotten himself pretty established and had had a pretty solid system of survival. At that point, the tornado rolls through, screws up a bunch of his stuff, but unlocks the the weight of the plane.

Wren

Well, so that abrupt ending actually does segue us very nicely into just skipping around my outline here, which is sequels.

Brandon

Yeah, tell me about the sequels.

Wren

I will, but after I tell you a little bit about Gary Paulsen.

Brandon

Okay, do that too.

Wren

All right. (Transition sparkle noise) So Gary Paulsen was born in Minion-apolis, Minnie-anapolis? Minneapolis...

Brandon

Yup. Got it in one.

Wren

Minneapolis.

Brandon

Minion-apolis, the official Illumination Entertainment city.

Wren

Let's move on.

Brandon

All the buildings are yellow. (laughter)

Wren

Before he was a writer, he was an aerospace engineer. And he reached this moment where he said, you know, my life is perfect. I've got the job. We've got the family. I'm not happy, I'm going to run away to be a writer. And then he did, which I thought was kind of great. I, the 30th anniversary edition of this book came with an author's forward which is where I learned some of this stuff. But in looking him up a little bit, I learned that actually some of Hatchet was not autobiographical, he never was lost in the wilderness. But he did spend a lot of time in the wilderness to escape from a sort of dark childhood with

his parents always fighting. And then there was a lot of sort of neglect and running away to the woods to you know, running away to the woods to read, running away to the woods to hunt for food because his parents had alcohol issues and were sort of not providing for him particularly well. He has a couple of different biographies. The first one is "Guts, the true stories behind Hatchet and the Brian books", which goes into more detail about all of that stuff and how he pulled a lot of stuff from his childhood into Hatchet. And he has a more recent biography that's more about his time in the military. Because before he was an aerospace engineer. He forged his parents signatures to join the army at age 17. He really did get attacked by a Moose. So he was able to write that experience through reality. I learned that because I watched an interview with him, and he pointed out which teeth he had lost from that experience.

Brandon

Oh no. Moose just seem very ornary.

Wren

You know, they're they're so big. They're just so big. And he had a quote, In that same interview, which I felt like I had to write down. Because I loved it so much. He was talking about how much he liked nature and respected nature, and why he wrote so many books about nature, because and I quote, "you can be the most popular person in the world, a bear will still eat your head." So Hatchet was his first you know, big, big book that got a lot of popularity, but he did write a number of additional books. "Dogsong" is another one of them. He got into the Iditarod and wrote a lot of books about that experience and that sort of thing.

Brandon

I was deep in Iditarod lore for a year or so in childhood.

Wren

Oh neat! And obviously Hatchet has won multiple awards. It won the 1988 Newbery Honor Award, which, you know, when we were kids, the Newbery books were, you know, the books that teachers were always pushing on us. You know, like, this has the big little like silver medal thing on the cover. You gotta read this one. Did you have that experience? I feel like I remember that being a thing.

Brandon

Yeah, no, totally. Newbery just kind of meant that it was something that I always knew teachers would approve of me reading. Because so many of the things they assigned were that, so like anytime, anytime that I found, one I was interested in that we hadn't been assigned, I was like, but if I'm reading this, they'll give me a pass. I can just read this in the middle of class, and they won't mind.

Wren

(transition sparkle noise) So Gary Paulsen is like super outdoorsy spends his time between, you know, a house in Australia and house in like a ranch in New Mexico. He has unfortunately passed away, he passed away last October of heart trouble, which...

Brandon

While flying a plane?

Wren

Brandon!

Brandon

Yeah that might have been crossing a line.

Wren

When I heard that he died I thought to myself, Okay, I need to reread the Hatchet books. And that's a little bit how this whole podcast was born. So thank you Gary Paulsen. But the moral of me going into his background is is you know, he's very outdoorsy, and suddenly found all this success with Hatchet. And you know, obviously, people clamored for sequels. And so there were sequels. (Transition sparkle noises) The first sequel was "The River." And the basic synopsis of The River is that the government is super interested to know how Brian survived. And so they send a I feel like he's like a reporter or scientist or somebody with him to go back to the spot, and just kind of go over everything that he did. So that this reporter or writer, whoever can use that to like train survival stuff, there was some implication that like, it was like military application situation stuff there. And then it turns into another survival situation because there's like a storm or something and the writer guy, I feel like he breaks his leg and also is in a coma. And so Brian doesn't have this adult figure. And so let's just survive some more!

Brandon

Is it like chronologically, pretty soon after the first book, is Brian still...

Wren

I don't reread The River and I'll tell you why in a minute. But uh, so I don't remember. But it doesn't really matter. Because The River gets retconned.

Brandon

Oh!

Wren

The third book in the Brian saga, but the second book timewise is "Brian's Winter," which is Gary Paulsen going back and being like, "actually, Brian doesn't get rescued. There was no transmitter. How does Brian survive the winter?" So it just continues on,

Brandon

But...

Wren

So he doesn't get rescued. And I love Brian's Winter. I didn't reread it yet, but I'm going to because if you remember, at the end of the book, he gets this windfall of food, a sleeping bag, you know, flares, things like that. So he's got a bump in, you know, the potential ability to survive the winter. But it's winter

in Canada. So if you're looking for more, and you think the ending was abrupt, go get Brian's winter, it'll fix it for you.

Brandon

Does it? Address the ending of the first book at all? Or does it just like, ask you to pretend that the epilogue didn't happen?

Wren

I don't recall. I don't remember if it's just like it has been so and so many days since Brian found the pack. I don't remember. I don't think it's necessarily like a super elegant, retcon. I'm interested in this like, Brian multiverse. It's still a retcon that I'm really thankful for because I, you know, wanted more and The River didn't really, I don't know, The River felt like a contrived way to get Brian back into survival situation. And Brian's winter is just like, wait, I made a mistake with that ending. Let's just keep going.

Brandon

Yeah knowing that there were sequels without looking into any of them. I was definitely kind of like wait is this like Gilligan's Island, where the sequel is just that he accidentally ends up back where he was somehow?

Wren

Well, that's like The River. And that's, you know, The River's fine.

Brandon

Yeah. You can only do that so many times in a series.

Wren

But I, and keep in mind, I didn't read Brian's Winter until I was, you know, in my 20s. So and I really enjoyed it. It's also important to note, like the timing of these sequels Hatchet was written in 1986. The river was written in 1991. So I think that I might have read The River when I was a kid, but I don't really remember. And I might not have cared all that much.

Brandon

Is there just the two or is there more?

Wren

Well, haha. There's Brian's winter which was written in 1996. Then there was Brian's Hunt, which was written in 1999. And Brian's Return I think it's called which was written in 2003. And I know that I've not read the most recent one.

Brandon

Oh, where's he returning from? The dead?

Wren

Maybe? I'm not gonna tell you.

Brandon

What's he hunting? Dinosaurs?

Wren

I don't think there's dinosaurs in the Hatchet cinematic universe.

Brandon

Look, I I know what happens in the sequel to 101 Dalmatians I put nothing out of the... out of possibility on sequels for things.

Wren

(Transition sparkle noise) In terms of other adaptations or sort of legacy of this whole thing, there was a movie, which I have not seen, which was released in 1990. It was not called Hatchet. I had to, I tried my very best to find out why it was not called Hatchet. But the internet would not reveal the secret to me. It was called "A cry in the wild." And I will include a trailer for cry in the wild in our show notes. Because it is... it is wild.

Brandon

It doesn't look promising. I gotta say.

Wren

There is bear wrestling. He does, he does not wrestle a bear in the book. One of the things you said to me before you started reading Hatchet, that I wrote down, was the fact that you seemed to be going into this book thinking that it was more about someone going out into the woods and roughing it rather than it being an accident.

Brandon

That was my assumption.

Wren

So I'm curious how, well A: why you thought that, and how you felt about it once you realized that was not the situation.

Brandon

Um, I thought it because a lot of books that I have read are more like kid runs away kind of things. Or even if it was not fully intentional, certainly not pilot has a heart attack and a plane crashes. So that's that's why I just kind of like the the preponderance of the tropes that I had experienced and things I have read that are in various ways tangentially, like, Hatchet in the sense that they're stories about kids surviving without adults. And you know, to a certain degree, I kind of didn't expect it to, as I said earlier, like, go to something as dark as the pilot of the plane having a heart attack right in front of Brian. And then crashing the plane and everything, which probably I should have not been super surprised

because I I read and even have on my list of maybe thing to do someday "Flight 116 is down", which is just a plane crash book. So...

Wren

Oh, because I was thinking about adding Alive to the list, have you read Alive?

Brandon

I haven't read Alive.

Wren

We are weird kids.

Brandon

That's kind of why my assumptions were such. Once it was clear, that was not the case. I don't know if that necessarily, like dramatically changed the story, per se. For me, I guess the possible exception is that like in some things, like I think "My Side of the Mountain" and some other stuff. Like the the hero isn't necessarily separated from civilization, right? Like they can they can go back if they want, like I think I am, I'm invoking My Side of the Mountain a lot, because it's the, you know, wilderness survival one that I had read. And I think in that he eventually like starts going into nearby town and like occasionally stopping in a general store or whatever. So like, the separation from civilization is partially self inflicted, and everything. It's not like he's lost and like, on his own and stuff. You know, sometimes it's because the kid is kind of hiding out and doesn't wanna be found, right? But like, not literally separated. So that element where it was like, there is no safety net for Brian, he's he's so far out into the wilderness that like any any effort he could make to get back to civilization himself would be a terrible idea, and he would not survive it. So that's kind of the element that I didn't necessarily expect to be in the book.

Content Warning: The following in black is where we discuss Mental Health and Suicide. Select the text to view.

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Wren

So well, so that does segue. I have said the word segue too many times, I'm looking forward to seeing what your word of the day is going to be once it's one of your episodes, is that one of the legacies of this book and something that is actually very current event related, is that you know, as of right now, it's, you know, February in the United States, and there is a lot of in school book banning and censorship happening.

Brandon

Yes, 2022. If you come to this episode, like years from now.

Wren

I meant to say the year and I don't know why I skipped it. So yes, a lot of these banned books are obviously centering on race issues and LGBT issues. However, this one of these groups that is heading these, these book banning lists, has also included Hatchet on the list, partially because of the attempted suicide. However, the primary reason they have a problem with this book, is it talking about the divorce, and how it paints the mother in this bad light for the infidelity. They you know, they take the suicide in their in their list as like, yeah, this this shouldn't be shown to kids because of this. But primarily, it's because the boy doesn't like his mom, because they're getting a divorce.

Brandon

Okay. I mean, I'm, I'm always going to have a hard time agreeing with book banning, so. I guess, I guess the fact that I'm like, not really on the same page with that, I would much more understand if the suicide thing was their key. I wouldn't necessarily support it. But like, it is pretty blunt. So like, I could understand that at a certain age, you would want to maybe not want a child to run across it. But it's not a banable offense. Yeah, but you know, we just talked about how, you know, when I was a kid, I barely noticed it, it didn't traumatize me. It barely registered. Yeah, like that. Like, that's kind of when whenever the talk is going on about banning books for that kind of content. It's like, yeah, I by and large, I'm like, I wouldn't understand that. I wouldn't understand that enough to be hurt by it. You know, or if we really step back, and like, look at other things that aren't books in children's lives, like, you know, lots of lots of other sources, they might encounter this not not just this book.

Wren

So it is on the banned book list in Tennessee. And it's on, you know, other other proposals from from some of these institutions. So yeah, before we get on to our fantastic rating system for this book, do you have any other sort of final thoughts about Hatchet? Things you liked about it, things you didn't like? How you think you might survive? If you were 13, in the woods in Canada.

Brandon

Oh I would die. But I will say that, like the thing that I was sort of screaming in my head the entire time. And probably the thing that I would spend a lot of my time trying to do from the get go was like, get to the plane. Like, I know that the plane was like submerged too much or whatever. But if I were in this situation, I would, I would probably be like, My only hope is to get to that freaking plane and get the

freaking survival pack. I either accomplish that somehow, or I die. And probably that would mean I would die. That's probably what would happen.

Wren

I agree. But at the same time, I understand why he kept pushing it out of his mind, because he kept thinking of the fact that in this lake was a dead body. Yeah. And every time he thought about it, he deliberately kept pushing it out of his mind. And I feel that. Once on the farm that I grew up on. Once I got to a certain age, you know, I had a certain task and that task was that I was in charge of gathering the eggs from the chickens at a certain time, and going in and making sure they were fed. One day I went in to gather the eggs and I saw one of the chickens was dead. And I ran out and it took me hours to get back in there and get the eggs and try not to stare at the dead chicken and it was scary. Like it was my first exposure. against seeing a dead thing. And it was just horrifying. And it was really hard to face, face it. And so I definitely understand a 13 year old boy, not wanting to swim down to the bottom of a lake where he knows there's a dead human.

Brandon

When I was a child, a friend and I found parts of a dead bird in the backyard and brought them inside to keep.

Wren

(Much laughter) I don't know why tickles me so much.

Brandon

We debated over who got the head and who got the wing.

Wren

Oh. My. Gosh.

Brandon

My mom, my mom shut that down. My mom was not a fan of that. But yeah, I, I also as a as a person with I would say, a mild case of Submechanophobia, the plane might have been insurmountable.

Wren

A lot of the things I liked, were the same things I liked as a kid, I just loved the, you know, the innovation. It's hard to say something's innovative when, you know, he's making a bone arrow. Like, that's he even says it in the book, like I'm congratulating myself like for something that people have done for 1000s of years. But it's, it was, it's fun seeing those moments of triumph.

Brandon

Yeah, in the process of working from a thing that doesn't work to thing that does work.

Wren

I liked how part of the way through, it starts time skipping around from, you know, suddenly at a point where I forget precisely how it goes. But he, you know, one chapter ends. And then a chapter starts

where it's, you know, like a month later. And then like, another chapter will be him remembering a few weeks ago when, you know, he got sprayed by a skunk, etc, etc. I liked the the format of the time skipping around like that to emphasize certain mistakes, as he, as he was calling it.

Brandon

And I imagined to kind of is also there, I suspect it's partially like kind of trying to give you a sense of how little time makes sense anymore at a certain point.

Wren

Oh, yeah, that's really good call. And I don't think that there was really anything I didn't like. I didn't, you know, there's often things that you revisit, as something that you loved as a child and you revisit it now and you're just like, ooh, that's problematic. But there wasn't anything here that did that to me. And I was really thankful for that.

Brandon

Yeah, yeah. I mean, certainly, I think your mileage may vary as far as like the handling of mental health in some cases and everything, but overall, I agree. Yeah. So for me, I really enjoyed it. I am a person who tends to really thrive on like dialogue. So I missed that a little bit in a general sense, but all the same. I had a lot of fun reading this book. So minor complaint.

Wren

(Transition sparkle noise) So how many giant peaches, were you gonna give this thing?

Brandon

What is our, what exactly is our scale? Is it out of five is it out of an arbitray number?

Wren

I mean, how many how many peaches are in like a like a bushel of peaches? Is bushel even the? What do you call a group of peaches?

Brandon

I think a group of peaches is a Georgia. So a bushel of dried peaches is 33 pounds as defined by Title Eight agriculture and animals Chapter One Department of Agriculture, subchapter P, Weights and Measures part 600: Weights and Measures Act, Section 600.

Wren

Why don't we go with five?

Brandon

I go, like three and a half Giant Peaches.

Wren

That's fair. I, I have two, two grades. I'm gonna give it four and a half giant peaches if you don't include Brian's Winter.

Brandon

Oh, I see. So if you're just taking it as a complete work.

Wren

If you are just taking it as a complete work, because it ends so abruptly,

Brandon

Sure.

Wren

But if you include Brian's winter, which gives me so much more of that good survival action that I wanted. It's five giant peaches.

Brandon

I wonder if Brian's Return is about him going through a lot of therapy.

Wren

There is talk of him going through therapy.

Brandon

Yeah, I think the epilogue mentions in passing. I just kind of want that book.

Wren

Thank you all for joining us on episode one of this here podcast.

Brandon

Yeah.

Wren

Next time will be Brandon episode!

Brandon

I have chosen as my first pick another harrowing tale of survival. "From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler" by EL Konigsberg. I'm only slightly joking about it being a harrowing tale of survival. I think it'll compare to Hatchet in some weird ways that I'm looking forward to. It's one of my favorites. Go check it out. If you want to be able to read along with us.

Wren

I haven't started it yet. So I'm fascinated by this description.

Brandon

There is a reason that I picked it as my first pick, and that is because there are certain superficial similarities to Hatchet

Wren

Okay. I also think it's sort of like a an interesting little note. That maybe we'll touch on a little bit more that I'm reading all of these books as physical paper books because I am slightly leaning towards a luddite. In terms of book content. I don't like reading my books digitally. Yeah. And Brandon, I think is reading everything digitally.

Brandon

I'm basically reading everything digitally, which is not because I necessarily like it better. I do prefer reading physical books, but I got tired of owning a bunch of physical books, except for like things I really love. I just am really prone to cluttering my apartment full of tons and tons of books that I like, okay, or haven't read yet, but I've owned for six years. I decided, you know what, these don't bring me joy.

Wren

I'm gonna give them away to kids or for some of the not for kids ones, I'll just like stick them in one of those little free libraries or something. The music used in this podcast was licensed by Epidemic Sound and the transcripts are generated by otter.ai.

Brandon

Have a question or comment for the team. You can find us on Twitter at @DogAteMyBookPod and on Instagram at MyDogAteMyBookReport or by emailing DogAteMyBookReport@gmail. We would be super excited to know what books you loved growing up!

Wren

Thanks for listening and sharing in some uniquely portable magic with us. That's a Stephen King joke. And yes, like I said in the intro, definitely going to be reading some of his because I'm a Mainer and it's a requirement.

Brandon

Maines Weird.

Wren

So's Virginia!