



*Lauren J. Sharkey*

## 316: Truth with a Capital T

**Gabriela Pereira:** Hello, and welcome, word nerds, to DIY MFA Radio, the show that will help you write more, write better, write smarter. I'm Gabriela Pereira, instigator of DIY MFA, and your host for this podcast. Now, let's talk writing.

Hello, hello, word nerds. Gabriela here, and welcome back to DIY MFA Radio. Our show notes are over at [diymfa.com/316](http://diymfa.com/316) because it's Episode 316. Also, if you're enjoying the podcast, please subscribe on iTunes, Google Play, Stitcher Radio, and you know, all the usual places, and please leave us a review. This will help other Word Nerds out there discover the show as well.

Now, today I have the pleasure of interviewing Lauren J. Sharkey. Lauren is a writer, teacher, and transracial adoptee. After her birth in South Korea, she was adopted by Irish Catholic parents and raised on Long Island.

Her creative non-fiction has appeared in Asian American Feminist Collective's digital storytelling project, *First Times*, as well as several anthologies including *I Am Strength!* and *Women under Scrutiny*. *Inconvenient Daughter* is her debut novel, and it is loosely based on her experience as a Korean adoptee. So, welcome, Lauren. It is so great to have you here today.

**Lauren J. Sharkey:** Thank you so much for having me, Gabriela. It's great to be here.

**GP:** I always like to start with the story behind the story. I already kind of know what the story behind the story is, because your bio kind of says it, but I'd love to get a sense for really what inspired you to write this particular story, this book.

**LJS:** Okay. So, this book actually started out as the thesis for my graduate school program for my MFA.

**GP:** Hmm.

**LJS:** It had originally started as a memoir, but the longer I worked on it and the more that I was to trying to really shape the narrative, it started to change on me and evolve into something larger. I realized it wasn't just my story I was trying to tell, it was the story of adoptees whose voices don't really get a spotlight shown on that. You know, most of the narratives surrounding adoption are rooted in reunion or what some in the community call "success stories" of adoptees who were extremely well-adjusted, but there are other stories. And I felt like that was really important to highlight.

**GP:** And you wrote this as a novel, which is really interesting to me. It's interesting that it started as a memoir, and I can totally see how it would start as a memoir. But then as you said, it became something bigger, larger than that. Can you explain that and unpack that a little bit for us? What does fiction allow you as a writer to do that you weren't able to do when you were working on it as a memoir?

**LJS:** So, I'm a memoir purist, I guess, is something that I would say. When I think of memoir, I think of a moment in time and being true to the spirit of that moment in time. But by that same token, I



associate memoir with truth. While I was telling some of my truth in this story, Rowan's journey took me to another place, and she sort of became her own person. You know what I mean?

The decisions that I needed her to make to show the truth of what it is to be a transracial adoptee, to not see yourself reflected in your immediate family or the community that you grew up in, wasn't just my experience alone; and I really needed to develop it. That's when I started getting away from my truth and going towards the trans racial adoptee truth, if that makes any sense.

**GP:** It totally makes sense. I mean, oftentimes what I talk about with students who are grappling with this very issue is there's a difference between factual truth or logistical truth versus the truth with the capital T the emotional truth of the story. Sometimes fiction allows us to get at that at emotional truth, in a way that like the logistics kind of start getting in the way of that.

**LJS:** Absolutely. I feel like memoir as the form I had originally chosen was extremely confining to me because I kept wanting to keep the integrity of events as they had happened to me, but when I let go of that and when I really allowed myself to tell just the story, that's when it really took off and became something else.

**GP:** That's really interesting because this is actually something that's been coming up a lot with students in DIY MFA courses and writers that I'm in encountering like in my own sphere of conversation is people who are grappling with the question, "Should I write this as a memoir?" Or sometimes they don't even question that they're writing it as a memoir and it's almost like the truth is binding them. Like, they're kind of getting stuck because of the facts. So, can you unpack a little bit? What were some of the choices that you began to make as you made that shift from memoir to fiction? What were some of the first steps that you took to make that shift?

**LJS:** So, as it says in the description of the book, it is loosely based on me. When I was originally starting it as a memoir, I think the thing I struggled the most with was dates and the romantic relationships that Rowan and I had. I found myself going back in like emails and old text messages. And I'm like, "Did we really say that? Were we at a Chili's? Or was it an Applebee's? Was this certain event in the winter, or was it warm out? I think it was warm out." And I found myself getting stuck in this minutia of detail. I was just so concerned about getting it right as it happened as if when the book came out, someone was going to have a copy and be like, "Hey, this isn't how it went down. You lied."

[laughter]

**LJS:** One of my recurring nightmares is being on the Ellen Show, and she brings out everyone that is a character in my book who resembles people in my real life and they all yell at me.

[laughter]

**LJS:** I usually wake up in like a cold sweat. But yeah, I think that for writers who are struggling with whether you should or shouldn't write a memoir or whether you should or shouldn't write your own story as fiction, I would say, just write the story as it comes to you and don't feel bound to the form of either and it'll just happen naturally. That sounds like a really cliché sort of thing to say, but when you stop focusing on the form, the story gets through.

**GP:** Oh, I love that. And that, of course, that's what every writer strives for, right? At our core, what we want is for the story to get through. And yet, oftentimes as you were saying, a lot of the fact-checking logistical, the minutia, as you put it, it gets in the way. It distracts us from that story really getting through.

At some point, I would imagine, and I've never written a fictionalized version of based on true events for my life so I don't have personal experience having done this, but I've watched a lot of writers do this. At some point, they have to like cut the umbilical cord, as it were, they need to basically say, "Okay, this really is fiction." And then they start making more dramatic changes to the story. And my guess, based on what you just said is that, first, the story gets through. And then once that happens, there would be further steps.

Can you talk a little bit about that? Did you in fact have a moment where you were like, "Okay, this is now Rowan's story, it's not me-Lauren's story?" And then you made a conscious shift to her story?

**LJS:** Absolutely. I think it was probably when I got to the ending, I had a very specific idea of how I wanted the book to end. One of the things that I really like about *Inconvenient Daughter* is that it doesn't really provide all the answers to the questions that it asks, because I feel like life doesn't provide all the answers to the questions that we ask. To get that sort of ambiguous ending, certain things needed to happen earlier in the story. I started reexamining some of the choices that Rowan makes and some of the people that she encounters. I realized that she needed to take very specific steps to end up where she does. That's when the invention sort of came in.

**GP:** Without spoiling the ambiguous ending, can you give us an example of a choice like that that you had to make?

**LJS:** [laughs] In my real life, I have never felt the desire to find my biological family. I've never felt the need to begin that reunion search. However, Rowan does. And that required a lot of research on my part. It actually sort of gave me an opportunity to explore a side of myself that I never would have. In *Inconvenient Daughter*, Rowan contacts her adoption agency to get her records, which I actually wound up doing specifically as a research point to have her do that. It wasn't true to who I was at the time and point that Rowan and I sort of sync up an age and experience. That was something I had to invent for her. To write about it authentically, I actually did go to my adoption agency and request my records.

**GP:** That's really, really fascinating actually, because that's a key element in the story as well. And so I think it's just really interesting that like you ended up doing, as almost ironic, that you ended up doing as research, the thing that you probably would never have done had you not been writing this book, which is kind of cool, I think.

**LJS:** Absolutely.

**GP:** So, in terms of one of the things that I think a lot of writers struggle with when it comes to fictionalizing reality is, "What if I get sued, what if my family disowns me? What if, what if, what if, what if," all those questions that people have around, like, "Will people get mad at me?" basically. And obviously, that's got to have crossed your mind at some point as you were writing this book. How did you grapple with that, and did that play into the decision to make this fiction versus memoir?

**LJS:** So, when I told my mom the title of the book, she kind of gave me this look; and I was like, it could be worse. It could have been *Inconvenient Mother*, but it's not.

[laughter]

**LJS:** A couple of years ago at AWP, I went to this really amazing panel about how to not get sued when writing memoir.



[laughter]

**LJS:** It was the most eye-opening thing. I will share a little bit of advice of what I gathered from that panel was basically in order for someone to sue you, they have to prove a form of loss, whether it's financial—It's usually mostly financial, like they've had to have lost a job or some sort of opportunity, or their lives have been seriously affected by what you wrote. I think a lot of authors are confronted with threats of lawsuits, but I don't think a lot of those come to fruition, obviously, I've never been sued yet, knock on wood. [laughs]

I think this goes into what we were talking about earlier about the big T, the Truth. I think when you write fiction, everyone is looking for the truth, the part of it that is your story. When you write memoir, everyone sort of looks for the lie, to point out and say that didn't happen. I know that this is easier said than done, but you can't let it in. You can't let the story you have to tell be impeded by what someone else is going to think about it. That's probably the most important advice that I can give for writers who were struggling with this. But also, I was afraid; a lot of Rowan's personality is similar to mine and some of the experiences are mine that I gave to her. That means that some of the people in her life are similar to people in mine, and people who know me really well—

**GP:** Right.

**LJS:** —will be able to spot that. I was particularly worried about how my mother would feel about the book and how she would feel about having remnants of our lives put on display because I didn't ask her permission. I didn't, which I'm sure that if she's ever interviewed, she will definitely, definitely make a point of, but when I was younger, I had always wanted to be a writer. And since nothing interesting had ever really occurred to me to write about, I always wrote about my own life and my own experience. And my mother repeatedly asked me never to write about her. While I think that's a common thing for family to request, you have to remember that the story belongs to both of you, you know, it belongs to you and it belongs to your family. And something that belongs to you is something that you can write about.

When I gave my mother the copy of the book, I made sure to tell her, first of all, I gave her a really long time. [laughs] When we first got the arcs in January, I immediately sent one to her, and I think it was beneficial that I had moved out of the house by then, because I'm not sure we would've survived. But I told her that I wasn't trying to shine a spotlight on things I felt that she could have done better as a mother, if anything, it was shining a spotlight on things I wish I had done differently as a daughter.

I think if you come at your novel or your memoir from the right place, which is to share a piece of yourself and let other people know that they're not alone in their experience, then the experience of others reading it will be beautiful, no matter what. But if you come at your novel or memoir to point a finger at someone and say, "See you were wrong," or to exact revenge on an old lover, which I may or may not have done.

[laughter]

**LJS:** I think that's when your story is compromised.

**GP:** Oh, that is such a great insight. I think it's really important for writers to hear that and to sort of see the process that you went through in grappling with it, because it is—I mean, relationships aren't easy. And as you said, the book is more like shining a light on your decisions than on the mother character.



I definitely felt like I could feel the tug of war between Rowan and her mother. There are moments where I want to smack that mother upside the head. Then there are other moments where I relate to her because I'm a mom. And so I can sort of relate to some of the things that her frustrations. And then there are moments where I remember my mom doing things for me that Rowan's mom does for Rowan, and so you can kind of—In fiction, the reader can get into the story from all these different directions that then allows us to really feel the weight of that emotional truth.

**LJS:** Absolutely, for sure.

**GP:** So, you mentioned, obviously, the relationships and whatnot that you may or may not have exacted revenge on. What about elements like settings, because I feel like people often don't think of world building when they're thinking of literary fiction or contemporary fiction? People often think of world building as something that happens in a galaxy far, far away—

[laughter]

**GP:** —but the truth is it happens in every book. I mean, one of the things that really jumped out at me as world building was the world building of the Catholic school system, and having gone to a all-girl school in New York City, I can kind of relate to some of those things. So, I know.

**LJS:** You're a survivor.

**GP:** Although our uniforms ended at the end of middle school, so I definitely felt for Rowan with the whole skirt thing. That stopped for me in eighth grade. [laughs] Can you talk a little bit about the settings and which elements you kept, which elements you changed, and if you changed anything at all, how you crafted the world of this story?

**LJS:** So, as you said in my bio, I did grow up on Long Island, which is where most of the story takes place. First of all, whenever I meet people and I say I'm from Long Island, no one knows where that is.

[laughter]

**LJS:** I always explain it the same way. It's like the tumor hanging off New York, because that's what it feels like. First of all, I think everyone, no matter where you grew up, no matter where you have those childhood memories, everyone thinks that the place they experienced childhood is super unique. I think that's especially true of Long Island. It has its own culture and language, and maybe even—

**GP:** And different parts of Long Island have different cultures too. That's what's super unique about it. What I love is that part when Rowan is talking about how she's not from the North Shore or the South Shore. She's kind of from the middle. It's this mishmash, but it has its own culture.

**LJS:** It really does. I chose to keep everything I loved and hated about Long Island in the book. The, I am all-girls Catholic school survivor. And I did go to an all-girls Catholic high school on the North Shore of Long Island. It was really another factor that contributed to my feeling of being an outsider. I had originally gotten into the school on a scholarship. So, I was not one of the people whose parents just wrote a check that cleared. I really had to maintain my grades, which I didn't really do the whole time, obviously [laughs] but there was a sense of privilege that went along with going to high school there. The parking lot was really indicative of my difference, at least I felt that it was, because there were Mercedes and BMWs and Bentleys that other girls had gotten as birthday presents or Sweet Sixteen presents, and I rode a bus 45 minutes to get to school.



I think there's many different settings in which Rowan feels like an outsider because even on Long Island, people from Nassau County feel like outsiders in Suffolk County, no one goes to Queens—

[laughter]

**LJS:** —unless you're really jonesing for some really good food, no one really goes to Queens. I didn't even know how to get there without a car. So the lifestyle of a teenager on Long Island is also really specific because you can't survive on Long Island without a car, but most teenagers can't drive.

**GP:** Right.

**LJS:** And then even when you get to the point where you can drive, there's nowhere to go. Because you're 17, 18, you can't drink. You barely know how to parallel park, so the city's out.

[laughter]

**GP:** You know, as someone who learned to drive in the city, I couldn't pull into those straightforward parking lots, but I could parallel park like a boss. My friends at college made fun of me all the time, because I'd park crooked in those like straight-in parking lot parking spots.

[laughter]

**GP:** I can kind of relate there except like the flip side of that equation. [laughs]

**LJS:** So, of building the world, I really wanted Rowan's world to be a reflection of who she was. So, the North Shore is kind of Long Island as wealth, a lot of old money, especially the further towards the North Shore, you get like towns like Brookville, Glen Cove, Manhasset, all of those towns people associate with money. And then as you go to the South Shore, it's not that there isn't money there, but it's sort of the other side of the tracks in terms of Long Island. But Rowan lives in the middle of that. Her family's not necessarily struggling, but they're not exactly getting new cars every week, or every year, you know? So, she's sort of in this in-between.

I think that as a transracial adoptee, you also exist in the in-between. In between the life you could have had and the life you have now, in between who the world thinks you are and who you really aspire to be, and in between your adoptive parents and your biological parents.

I think that was really integral to the story. But when I was growing up on Long Island, I definitely wanted to be anywhere else. And now that I live on my own in a different state, I find myself missing it. I wanted *Inconvenient Daughter* to sort of be a love letter to all the things I miss about Long Island, like 24/7 diners.

**GP:** Yes.

[laughter]

**LJS:** And bagels.

**GP:** Yes. All yes, so much yes to that. I can totally relate to that feeling of two worlds, although very different way. My family, my parents immigrated from Brazil. And so when I went to a prep in New York City school, I was kind of like their token immigrant first-generation person. And I'm like, "Wait a minute, this is weird."



Can you talk a little bit about that? Because I think the novel really handles it so elegantly, that push-pull where on one hand, the people who Rowan has, like the people closest to her, her parents don't look like her, and the people in her school don't. Like, she's, I think, the only Asian girl in her class or in her school, or something like that. She definitely feels like an outsider in that way. At the same time, she also doesn't feel connected to her birth parent. So, can you talk a little bit about how she navigates that and figures out where she belongs really? Because, really, it feels like the story is her trying to figure out where she really belongs.

**LJS:** Yeah, for sure. So, you know, when I was growing up, I was the only Asian person anywhere, besides my brother, who's also adopted from Korea. We were basically the only Asian people we knew. And the only place that I saw other people who looked like me was at the nail salon or the Chinese food place that we ordered from on Friday nights or the dry cleaners. I don't say that to indulge in Asian stereotypes, but those were the only places where I found people who looked like me. It was definitely a challenge to understand what it meant to be Asian, but also what it meant to be an American.

I still feel like that's something I struggle with. When I meet Asian people, they always ask me why I don't speak Korean. I will say, "I'm adopted, my parents are white," to which they'll always reply, "Well, why don't you learn?" That's something I've been thinking about a lot lately. Like, why haven't I learned? Why haven't I explored my Korean culture? I feel like so much time has passed, and so much about me is not Asian, that I don't feel like I can take ownership of a culture I've never known.

**GP:** Yeah.

**LJS:** I feel like even if I were to explore Korean cuisine, Korean culture, the language, it would be as a tourist, as someone who's just interested in getting to know about this place, but it doesn't really belong to me. It's not really home. And that's really a challenge that Rowan faces because at the end of the day, what she's really searching for is where she fits in this life where she feels so out of place. I think, or I hope that people will also find a bit of themselves in Rowan, because I think we're all looking for that place where we fit, that place where we can call home.

**GP:** Yeah. There's a universality, I think, to Rowan's struggle that even if we haven't had the same experience, there are parts of it that, because we've always felt—We've all had a moment where we felt like the outsider, like we didn't belong, like everyone else is looking at us and we're kind of sticking out. And so I think that's what makes the story so relatable is that while it is grappling with a very specific experience, it's also grappling with it in a way that kind of lets the reader in no matter what our individual experience might have been. That's one of the things that's really drawn me into the story.

I'd love to talk a little bit about the timeline because it's really interesting to me and it's so artfully done, and the story kind of oscillates, and not even oscillates, it weaves through time. We start in the present moment and Rowan is in an emergency room. We don't quite know what's going on, but we know that something not so great is going on. And then she kind of hints at what it could be or could not be, but we don't get very distinct information, at least, not at first. And then we kind of weave back into her memories and she's remembering different episodes, but it's not like she's remembering it in chronological order. She remembers a snippet here, that's in high school, and then another snippet when she's three and then another snippet when she's in elementary school. It kind of jumps, but it doesn't feel jumpy.

Can you talk about the—That's a very unique format for a story in terms of chronology. Let's be real here, it's not your typical timeline shifting story. And it's not like we have at the end of every moment



in time, an indicator of like 1980-something or 1990, you know what I mean? It's not like most stories that jump timelines, like we have an indication of where we are. Here, it's almost stream of consciousness. We're kind of just going the flow of her memory. So, why did you choose that format, that chronology, and how did you do it?

**LJS:** First of all, thank you so much for saying that it's artfully done because the feedback that I've gotten from some reviewers has been that the timeline has been a struggle. It's something that I've actually been thinking a lot about lately. I knew that in order for this story to work, the reader needed to gain insight into who Rowan was, and who she is now. For that to happen, there needed to be an, what I call an anchor, which is the main thread that the story is taking place. So, that would be the present moment where we start opening in the hospital, and we're sort of working our way back through what happened. That's really the anchor that's guiding the reader to the next bit because every chapter opens and we return to that moment.

**GP:** Exactly.

**LJS:** Then it's certain cues in the anchor that highlight different things that Rowan needs to explore about herself. Without giving too much away, when we open the book, Rowan is in the hospital and they're taking her family history. And for a lot of adoptees, the family history question is a really triggering experience, because many of us don't have access to that information. So, then Rowan kind of really reflects on what family history means to her, and that's how we're transported back into the past. We see Rowan's development and how she sort of internalizes that; almost like a port key. [laughs]

**GP:** Yeah.

**LJS:** I wanted the anchor of each chapter to sort of transport the reader back in time so that they're not only seeing what's happening to Rowan now, but what caused her to be in this position. That's really how the story just sort of came together. Originally, it was written all chronologically, and I read it through and I was like, "This is boring." [laughs] You know, "this is kind of just run of the mill Point A to Point B." And that's not how I like to read stories, you know? I like to try to discover things. And I felt like when I wrote it chronologically, you didn't really discover anything.

**GP:** Okay. So, we got to unpack that process, because when I asked that question, I did not know that it was written chronologically, although I can totally see that, how one would do that and then reassemble and re-shift things around. But how did you actually do that? Like, okay, you've got the manuscript of *Inconvenient Daughter* in front of you, or however many pages of it, and now you're reassembling it in this new order. What did you do?

**LJS:** I went into my parents' driveway and got a bunch of paperweight-like objects, my cell phone, a couple of plates, just anything that I could find, scotch tape dispenser, and I laid out all the moments in the book. I sort of just looked at it because I feel like you need to see it all laid out. And I asked myself, "Why is this so boring? What is it that I don't like about the way I structured this?" I didn't like that it all seemed too neat. You know, girl has problem, girl creates problems for self, girl solves problem. Because I feel like in my own life, I don't really look at myself chronologically, if that makes any sort of sense, which it probably doesn't.

**GP:** No, it totally does.

**LJS:** But usually, when I get into a situation or where I'm about to make an important decision, I always ask myself how did I get here? I feel like in movies, especially, that's sort of a common thing is



we start off at the bank heist and they're in the shootout, and then we flash back to like three months earlier when we were all planning the heist, you know? I sort of looked at my first task was, what is going to be my anchor, what is going to guide the reader through? And then I decided that had to be the now. Then the more I looked at the now narrative, which was probably the last 20 pages of the book, I realized that I had subconsciously left myself cues that would segue into different parts of the story. So, I just sort of pieced it together that way.

**GP:** It's so fascinating to hear that process. First off, I can totally relate to the idea of seeing the project and how important it is to have that visual. I love the image of you putting the paperweights on your driveway and just sort of putting all the different moments down in order. I also love this idea of finding kind of the entry points in the anchor, the now.

Can you give us an example? I mean, you mentioned the family history being an entry point. So, how would that then, so that our listeners can kind of piece together what your process might have looked like. Let's say the entry point in the now is family history, how did you then choose which memories, because there's a lot of memories, I'm presuming, that could tie to family history, but how would you choose the specific ones that would then go into that chapter to create the story?

**LJS:** For sure. One of the things that I always struggle with, whether it's writing this book or writing another short story or anything, I always struggle with the beginning because I always wanted to be kick-ass. I'm like, yeah, it's got to be good. Otherwise, if it's not good, no one's going to read it. And then the cursor just blink for like an hour and I'm like, "man, I don't really have anything," you know?

[laughter]

**LJS:** So, when we open the book, in the hospital scene, the last line, I think of that section, it's probably pretty pathetic that I don't know the exact line, but Rowan says, "I don't have any family history, I'm adopted," or some derivative of that. That cues the reader in, "Hey, this person is adopted."

And then I thought about my adoption journey a lot. I remember being in my teenage years and not really understanding how I came to be here in the United States, not really understanding infertility issues that my parents had dealt with and their decision to adopt. But the more I thought about it, the more I was like, "No, this goes back further." This goes back to the first time I discovered I was adopted, and it wasn't from my mother or my father. It was from a kid in my kindergarten class. That's where we end up in *Inconvenient Daughter* is Rowan's first day of kindergarten, and she discovered she's adopted. I think the genesis of that moment was tied to the fact that being adopted is a major factor in every decision Rowan has ever made; and it's central to her identity, which is why I started there at the beginning, and then dialed back.

**GP:** I love hearing your thought process, and how you pulled together all the pieces and wove together all the pieces of this story. I feel like we could be geeking out about the technique in this book for another five hours—

**LJS:** Oh my god. I would love that.

**GP:** —but in the interest of time, I wanted to ask you, what is next for you? What do you have coming up that you'd like to share with our listeners?

**LJS:** I'm also working on a second book. It's going to be about three sisters who are adopted and they go in search of their biological mother. I'm in the process of doing a lot of research for that now.

One of the main challenges that I'm having is that as we talked about, I don't have a lot of insight into Korean culture. So, once it is safe to travel, I'm hoping to set aside time to actually go to Korea and do some boots on the ground research.

**GP:** Oh, that sounds really exciting. And oh, that's going to be so cool. I can't wait for that.

**LJS:** For the food.

[laughter]

**GP:** I always like to end with the same question: what's your number one tip for writers?

**LJS:** When I first got my publishing contract, there were a bunch of people that I had called and at the top of the list was a mentor of mine. He's been a mentor for many years, and he told me that he was proud of me. And then he said, "Lauren, it's not going to save you." That really stuck with me because when I got the contract, I thought I was going to feel different. Obviously, I felt super happy in everything, but I thought it would fill some void. I thought it was going to validate every decision I'd ever made, it was going to sort of be the "See mom and dad, writing isn't futile" sort of thing. That's when I really discovered that if you're going to be a writer, you have to define what success means for you. And if success is selling a million copies or success is getting a publishing contract or success is just finishing something, you have to define that for yourself. Every step you take has to be in pursuit of whatever your definition of success is, but it has to be yours. It can't be anyone else's.

**GP:** Ugh. That is such great advice. And definitely something that we haven't heard shared as the number one tip before. I love that. "It's not going to save you." Such, such great insight. Thank you so much, Lauren, for being here today and for sharing so honestly about all the things with your book and your experience. It's been an absolute pleasure to speak with you.

**LJS:** Thank you so much, Gabriela. I hope to come back.

[laughter]

**GP:** All right, word nerds. Thanks so much for listening. Keep writing, and keep being awesome.

