

# Romance\_Podcast

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**Erin** 00:16

Hello everyone and welcome to see CMPL February 2024 podcast and today we're going to be talking about romance titles so we have some romance recommendations with you. I am Erin Durrett teen services librarian here at CMPL. And I am joined by

**Celia** 00:33

I'm Celia Mulder. I'm the head of collection management also a romance enthusiast.

**Sarah** 00:39

And I'm Sarah Von Oeyen, an adult services librarian and romance reader.

**Erin** 00:44

Excellent. I feel like we have the three perfect people to be doing this podcast. So, all right, I'm gonna start us off with a teen read. This one is my absolute favorite of 2023 for teen romance. So, it is called Gwen and Art Not In Love by Lex Croucher and Lex writes teen and adult romance. They have one coming out in the next month or so for adults. But I love this description so it's Heartstopper meets A Knight's Tale a nice tale in this queer medieval rom com. Why did they view about love friendship and being brave enough to change the course of history? So, it's been hundreds of years since King Arthur's written his descendant Arthur, a future Lord and general gadabout has been bothered her been Excuse me but true to Gwendolyn the quick-witted short-tempered Princess of England since birth, the only thing they can agree on is that they despise each other. They're forced to spend the summer together at Camelot in the realm of their nuptials, and within 24 hours, one has discovered Arthur kissing a boy and Arthur's mom digging for Gwen's childhood diary and found confessions about her crush on the kingdom's only lady night. Bridget LeClaire realizing that they might take better allies than enemies when an art make a reluctant pack to cover for each other. And as things heat up in the annual Royal tournament, Gwen so swept off her feet by her night. And Arthur takes an interest in Gwen's royal brother. So, this is just so much fun. It's very funny. It's very silly. It's it initially sounds like a friends to lovers romance and it's not because they really don't like each other. And then they kind of become friends through, you know, having...having similar interests.

**Celia** 02:31

Oh, nice.

**Erin** 02:32

Yeah, it's a really fun book. And I just really enjoyed it. I listened to the audio version of this. It was a lot of fun. I'll definitely have to add that to my to read list. Sarah, tell us about your...your first title.

**Celia** 02:39

Yeah, I've seen that book on a bunch of recommendation list. So, I'm glad you've read it. My first one is *A Cowboy to Remember* by Rebecca Weatherspoon. Um, so this book has all the tropes of a Western romance plus some more, and I don't really usually read cowboy books, but I did really enjoy this one. I like ones that do something different with the story, or have contemporary cowboys and find them much more interesting than the historical cowboys. This one is about a chef who takes a fall at a party and ends up in the hospital with amnesia. Thus the cowboy to remember part, since she doesn't have any family her emergency contacts of friends you grew up with in childhood, who now happened to be hot cowboys who own a luxury dude ranch in California. One of whom is her former crush and ex rodeo rider, Zack. So, we've got cowboy Second Chance romance and some amnesia...amnesia thrown in for good measure. Very fun book.

03:52

All right, well done. For my first title. I will go with the one that I loved most of my recent reads. And it is *We Could Be So Good*, by Cat Sebastian. And this is a historical friends to lovers romance set in the 1950s in the newsroom, and I'll just read the publisher description because it's better than anything I could make up. Here we go. Nick Russo has worked his way from a rough Brooklyn neighborhood to a reporting job at one city's biggest newspapers. But the late 1950s are a hostile time for gay men. And Nick knows that he can't let anyone into his life. He just never counted on meeting someone as impossible to say no to as Andy. Andy Fleming's newspaper tycoon father wants him to take over the family business. Andy has no intention of running the paper. He's barely able to run his life. He's never paid a bill on time routinely gets lost on the way to work and would rather gouge out his own eyes then deal with office politics. And he agreed to work for a year in the newsroom knowing he'll make an ass of himself and hate every second of it. Except that Nick Russo keeps rescuing Andy showing him the right hopes tracking down his keys freeing his tie when it gets stuck in the ancient filing cabinets. They're unlikely friendship students sharpens into feelings they can't deny. But what feels possible in secret, this fragile tender thing between them seems doomed in the light of day. Now Nick and Andy have to decide if for the first time they're willing to fight. This book is just so adorable. I loved it so much. I just wanted to give both of them a hug. And it was just, it was completely adorable. And you know, the 1950s. Obviously, to be realistic, the 1950s was a hard time to be gay. But this book manages to thread the needle between being realistic but also hopeful and it does have a nice happily ever after.

**Celia** 05:43

Yeah, I would say Cat Sebastian is one of my absolute favorites. I just read her mystery duology that was set in like the 1940s. So right after World War Two, and it has a lot of like the before/after effects in it. We could do a whole podcast on Cat Sebastian. But that's not the theme of this one. So, Erin, let's move us on to something else.

06:05

My next title is actually a current hot read from hot reads. It came out just recently actually. And it's been flying off the shelves. So, it is by actually an adult romance author who kind of went a little bit into teen for a so it's called *Check and Mate*. It's by Allie Hazelwood and it actually was the winner for best young adult fiction 2023 by good reads, so I voted for it too. So, in this Kloppner and swoon-worthy YA debut from bestselling author of the *Love Hypothesis*, life's moving pieces brings rival chess players together in a match for the heart. Mallory

Greenleaf is done with chess. Every move counts nowadays after the sport led to the destruction of her family four years earlier. Mallory's focus is now on her mom, her sisters and the dead-end job that keeps the lights on. That is until she begrudgingly agrees to play in one last charity tournament and inadvertently wipes the board with notoriously Kingkiller Nolan, Nolan Sawyer, current world champion and reigning that way of chess. Nolan's loss to an unknown rookie shocks everyone what's even more confusing his desire to cross pawns again, what kind of Gambit is Nolan playing, the smart move would be to walk away resigned game over, but Mallory's victory opens the door to sorely needed cash prizes, and, and despite everything she can't help but feeling drawn to this enigmatic, enigmatic strategist. As she rockets up the ranks, Mallory struggles to keep her family safely separated from the game that wrecked it in the first place. And as her love for the sport she so desperately wanted to hate begins to rekindle. Valerie quickly realizes that the games aren't only on the board, the spotlight is brighter than she imagined. And the competition can be fiercely attractive, and intelligent, and infuriating. So, this is a really great kind of bad exactly enemies to lovers, but it kind of is, it is really good for, I'd say high school teens and up. It's kind of a new adult, she's actually just graduated high school. So, she's 18 and technically an adult. So, give this one to older teens and up. But it's a really lovely done and I learned a lot about chess that I knew about before. So that's always fun.

**Celia** 08:27

Yeah, that's always fun. That's why I like about some sports romances, is you learn a lot of stuff. My second one is *The Unhoneymooners* by Christina Lauren. And if you have not read a Christina Lauren book, I highly recommend them for anyone who likes light fun contemporaries, not to see me but heavy on the romance. Now, their earlier books are definitely like scorching almost erotica. But they're later more recent books have been more of these light fun contemporaries that I have to read them in one setting. I cannot put them down. I haven't been able to put any of them down. *Unhoneymooners* is about Olive, and Olive, with the exception of herself and her nemesis, everyone else at her sister's wedding gets horrible food poisoning from some bad seafood. So, her sister has this honeymoon or a plan that she won as a as a free trip in a sweepstakes. And she insists the Olive go on the honeymoon. Well, of course her nemesis the groom's brother is also going on the honeymoon because the groom said you need to go and take our...our honeymoon. So, because it was won in a contest they of course have to pretend to be their siblings and pretend to be married. Hijinks ensue. I'll leave it at that.

**Sarah** 09:56

Of course.

**Erin** 09:58

That sounds very funny and I was just thinking about there's nothing more disappointing...disappointing than something that's labeled as a rom com and it's lacking on the comedy aspect.

**Celia** 10:07

Oh, Christina...Christina Lauren is very like it's...it's two writers. It's Christina and Lauren, but they are very funny. And their voices are great.

**Erin** 10:16

Alright, Sarah, what's your next title.

**Sarah 10:18**

So my next one is not funny. It is more on the like angsty romance spectrum but it is also fairly fairly chaste, actually, because it is a Muslim romance novel. I recently read *Much Ado About Nada*, but it was medalla Luden. Despite the title, it is not a retelling of Shakespeare it is in fact, a take-off on Jane Austen's *Persuasion*, which is the ultimate second chance romance and full of angst.

**Erin 10:50**

My favorite Jane Austen.

**Sarah 10:51**

Yes, it is many people's favorite. And I did love this book very much. So, this is about Nada Sayed, who is an engineer nearing 30 She, of course still lives at home with her parents in the fictional Golden Crescent neighborhood of Toronto. Her friend thinks she needs to get out more and says, Oh, we're having this big Muslim convention downtown. And I really want you to meet my new fiancé. So, she gets dragged out. Well, of course, her best friend's new fiancé, Zane, has a brother named Baz, who is not as secret ex flame that she's never told anybody about. So, all of the structure of *Persuasion* is there. But it's been updated delightfully to the contemporary world. And you know, the Jane Austen sensibility about social norms and gossiping. Women is completely perfect for the devout Muslim community, especially at all these like South Asian aunties and the gossip network. And it just really fits in nicely, but it's also a story about not coming into her own and deciding what she wants to do with her life. And, and growing up.

**Celia 12:08**

That sounds awesome.

**Erin 12:09**

It does.

**Sarah 12:10**

Yeah. And then, given that it is about people who are, you know, practicing Muslims, there is no on-screen real romance stuff. So, it would be completely appropriate for a teen audience as well.

**Celia 12:26**

Well, it's also Jane Austen. So, you know, yet get keep it to the end.

**Erin 12:32**

There's a lot of Jane Austen retellings for teens and not necessarily all romance one of my favorites actually mystery series.

**Celia 12:40**

Yes.

**Erin** 12:42

For another podcast, my third title, so I wanted to choose one that was other than contemporary romance. There's not a lot of historical romance in teen that's why my...my first one being in King Arthur days was great. But this one is a little bit of a fantasy. It's by Jason June, and he has three or four other teen romance titles. And it's also a hot read. So, we have several copies of this. It's going to be part of a two-book duo. So, this is the first one it came out this past summer. It's called the Spells We Cast and it is about Nigel Barrett, who has spent his whole life preparing for the culling, which is a spell casting competition that determines which of the world's teenage magicians will be stripped of their powers to preserve magical balance. Nothing could have prepared him to face Ori Olson, a broody rival who's caustic wit cloaks a painful past. From the moment an Nigel and Ori meet sparks fly, their powers are stronger, more thrilling, the closer they get, not that they not that they can risk getting attached. Because as the field narrows and the culling grows, mortgage interest and Agilent already realize there's more at stake than just their powers. The greatest threat to magic, their future and all of humanity might be the connection growing between them. And it's really interesting, you can definitely tell like it's written. It's not, you know, complete, there's definitely more of the story. I'm really interested in this magical world and like this balance of power, there's obviously some like some corruption in this magical world. And I think they're...they're kind of realizing that everything they've been told by this organization isn't really the case. And so if you'd like intrigue that that part is really interesting, too. And so, then the second book, The Magic You Make will be out in October of this year. So, looking forward to that.

**Celia** 14:42

But here's an important question for romance novels. Does it at least have an HFN happy for now? Or are we like complete cliffhanger situation?

**Erin** 14:52

It's not complete thing or is actually

**Celia** 14:54

okay.

**Erin** 14:55

cliffhanger with a magic, okay. Their relationship is interesting because is so because they have such this attraction and magnetic power. Their magic sparks each other and they become more powerful because of that, but it's also very dangerous. So, they, they don't realize that at first but they like raise the data and stuff like that like crazy things happen because they're...they're so powerful together.

**Celia** 15:20

Gotcha. All right. Fascinating. All right. My next one is Delilah Green Doesn't Care by Ashley Herring Blake. This series seems to come out of nowhere. I picked up the book, the first book, Delilah Green and I was super surprised, but also so glad that I picked it up. It is the best lesbian contemporary romance series I've read in a long time. Probably the best contemporary romance series in general. But the lesbian relationships are really well done in it. Delilah Greene is back in town for her estranged sister's wedding, a wedding that's full of events,

drama, a horrible groom, and her sister's adorable friend who Delilah doesn't mean to get attached to but somehow she can't help herself. And pretty soon after I started reading the first one. This is not a spoiler, because it's the title of the second one. The second book is Astrid Parker Doesn't Fall and Astrid Parker is the bride and the first book, so you're like, Well, clearly something's gonna happen in this book, because the title is like she's the main character in the lesbian sequel, and then the front. Yeah, so I was all in. And I love that they took like the second white, like even better than the first one because they took the character who was like kind of the nemesis in the first one and most gave her...her own story. And I love that. That happens in romance series.

**Sarah** 16:55

That's awesome. I noticed you've got a bit of a wedding theme going on here.

**Celia** 17:00

Not intentionally. No, not intentionally, and the last one doesn't. So, I'll keep that one secret for now.

**Sarah** 17:09

Well, my next pick is also a contemporary romance. It was called Kissing Kosher by Jean Meltzer. There are not very many romance novels by Jewish authors about Jewish characters and Jeanne Meltzer is filling this niche very nicely. And I have liked her last couple books, but this is her third. And honestly, I think it is her best so far. The first two by her. The first one was the Matzah Ball, were romcom in that kind of ridiculous sort of way like crazy hijinks happened a lot and this one is not about that this one is a little more serious and emotional, but it does still have the comedy elements. This one is an enemy to lovers story about Avi Tall Cohen and Ethan Lippmann whose family's own arrival babka bakeries in Brooklyn. Ethan has been sent by his grandfather to do corporate espionage at Avi Talls' shop, he's undercover under his mother's maiden name, trying to steal the recipe for their pumpkin spice BBQ recipe. And what was good about this book is that whole secret identity thing that happens in so many novels, it actually comes out into the open about halfway through rather than at the end. And the development of their relationship comes a lot after the revelation. So, it's like, they're not building their romance on a lie. They're still keeping it a secret from their families, because the rivalry is actually about, you know, their grandfather's, each of whom claim you know, was betrayed by the other one, no one knows the full story. But Avi Tall and Ethan together, know who each other is, and fall in love on the basis of truth. And then it's just figuring out how they can make it work in the real world with their families. The other thing that's interesting about this book and all of her, Jean Meltzer's books are is that they all involve chronic illness. Jeanne Meltzer, herself has chronic illness, which is why she is an author now, she wasn't able to hold down a job because of the pain and what she had to go through. So, all of her heroines also have some kind of chronic pain condition, including Avi Tall. And that is an important part of her character and something that she and Ethan have to work through as they develop their relationship, like how are we going to build our, you know, physical relationship around her limitations, and that's done very well.

**Erin** 19:47

Awesome. All right. Oh, we're down to our final picks. Okay. So, my final pick is also a nominee for best young adult fiction for Goodreads Choice Awards. for teens, and it is also written by an adult romance author. So, if you've been, you know, checking out what's new in contemporary adult in the last couple of years, you probably

familiar with Talia Hibbert, who wrote the Brown Sisters books. And her first team book is called Highly Suspicious and Unfairly Cute. It's very cute title. And it is a story...it's a laugh out loud story about a quirky content creator and a clean-cut athlete testing their abilities to survive the great outdoors and each other. So, it's really fun to you I will say because it is in England, and I love accents and audiobooks. So, if you have an option to listen to this, I recommend that but Bradley Green is pretty much perfect. He's a foot football star manages his OCD well enough, and comes out on top in all of his classes, except the ones he shares with his ex-best friend Celine. And Celine Bangarra is a conspiracy theory, obsessed social and social media star. And her followers eat up her takes on everything from UFOs to holiday overconsumption. Yet, she's still not cool enough for the popper popular kids table, which is why brands abandoned her from the in crowd years ago. At least that's how spleen sees it. These days, there's nothing between them other than petty insults and academic rivalry. So, when someone signs up for a survival course in the woods, she's surprised to find Brad right beside her horse to work as a team for the chance to win a Grand Prize, these two teams must trudge through, just not just mud and dirt, but they're messy past. And as the adventure brings them closer together, they begin to remember the good bits of their history, but has too much time past or just enough to start a whole new kind of relationship. So, I really like this because there's like the past relationship that they had, they were best friends, middle school, and then in middle school, they had a falling out. And then like they're...they're graduating high school and they're actually another really great element of this is their actual their moms are best friends. So even if they don't talk, they always are very aware of what's going on with each other because their moms talk about them all the time. So, I really enjoy that element of this book. It's a lot of fun.

**Celia 22:31**

Yeah, that one is on my TBR list for sure. All right, my last one, I'm going historical for this one, Romancing the Duke by Tessa Dare. If you're at all a Bridgerton fan or a Julia Quinn fair fan, check out Tessa Dare next. Love them both Tessa Dare, unfortunately, it's been a little bit since she's put out a new book. But that's okay. She has a pretty big backlist to move through. And this is actually one of her older books, but it is the first in the series. And I just came across it relatively recently. So, the Romancing the Duke in this series, in each book, a young woman has inherited a castle. That's the premise of the series. Okay? But getting to actually claim that inheritance and living in the castle isn't so easy, obviously must be conflict. In this one in particular is he finds that her crumbling inherited Castle already contains a Duke, one who everyone thought was dead, but it's very much not. He thinks he owns the place. She says nope, I own the place. And to add a twist to it, the Duke is mostly blind. And so, as it turns out, the castle was sold out from under heaven because everyone thought he was dead and he can't read his correspondence. So, I'd say Tessa Dare does a wonderful job in this book of exploring the challenges to Duke experiences. Being mostly blind, and living in a rundown castle known to take care of him at all, but giving him enough agency to do things on his own and to you know, figure out who he is and how he can navigate the world and setting him up to be this dashing, tortured, romantic hero. It was fun. And I've read the rest of this series. They're all very fun.

**Erin 24:26**

I'm a fan. She's written so much in the past that I honestly don't remember what it was, as I read, but I know I enjoyed it.

**Celia 24:35**

The girl needs to do series is also very good, but I haven't read that one as recently so I thought this was a better one to talk about.

**Erin** 24:42

Alright Sarah, and you're gonna wrap us up with what's your last election.

**Sarah** 24:46

All right, my last election is called Kiss the Girl by Sarita Cordova. And as you can guess from this title, this is a retelling of The Little Mermaid. This is part of the Disney imprint, new Series meant to be where multiple different authors retell different Disney fairy tales. So, these are definitely the Disney versions of the fairy tale, which is what makes it so fun as an adult romance because it's. So, let's say that's aimed at the new adult demographic, late teens, early 20s. And it follows you know the beats of your movie, all the characters have their nice little parallel. So, the fun is in discovering who is going to show up somehow. So, this one, we have Ariel Del Mar, who is one of seven sisters. They are a pop group called the Siren Seven. But Ariel would like to take a break from all of this fame. And one night at a concert she meets Eric Reyes is get it. He's an up and coming singer songwriter. And it seems that his band is about to go on tour, but they just lost their merch person so she offers herself as their new merch girl and goes on the road with him and his band under cover. Eric's band manager is Odilia Garcia now we should note that Garcia in Spanish means bear. Like Ursula means bear. So, we have all of our parallels. And yes, Odilia does have some past beef with Ariel's father. Yeah, it's...it's really cute. It's cute. So yeah, I use like romance and your Disney version that

**Celia** 26:48

I've gotten Beauty the Beast one on my shelf that I I'm not going to try to remember the title there but it was written. Oh, man. See now the author's

**Erin** 27:03

I think that was By the Book.

**Sarah** 27:05

Yes By Jasmine Guillory.

**Celia** 27:07

Yes. Thank you. Thank you. That's the one.

**Sarah** 27:10

Yes. And the first one in this series was a Cinderella retelling done in July fee. Yep. And that was that was fun too.

**Celia** 27:18

And I'm pretty sure Christina Lauren is doing one as well coming up that I saw on their Instagram.

**Sarah** 27:24



Yep. Christina Lauren is doing number four in the series, which will be a retelling of Tangled aka Rapunzel.

**Celia** 27:31

Yes, that's why I knew that like I know, was one I was really excited about because I love Rapunzel and I love Tangled.

**Erin** 27:40

Tangled is so underrated. It's so great.

**Celia** 27:42

So underrated. Yeah. I want to end with something kind of fun and quick. As you could probably tell throughout this podcast. romance books have a lot of tropes and it's very fun to read all the tropes, and almost every romance reader I've ever met has a favorite one. So, what's your favorite trope? Just really quickly, I'll say mine first. Mine is always friends to lovers. If the book says a friends lovers romance I'm in that's all I need to hear. Sarah what about you?

**Sarah** 28:16

I don't know. But I think I've been reading a few too many grumpy sunshine romance novels recently. There's so many of them and they're so good and that's what my Cat Sebastian we could be so good as a little bit of a grumpy sunshine and it's horrible.

**Celia** 28:32

Absolutely. Erin?

**Erin** 28:34

I'm so I do love friends' lovers, but I think I equally love anime lovers. So, it's kind of opposite of that. I really like I really like when people don't put and they like argue and fight and then that like sparks attraction like that. I enjoy that a lot.

**Celia** 28:57

Yeah, there's I mean, there's a ton of tropes and you can just go down. rabbit holes, wrong bed romances amnesia, or only one bed stuck together and an abandoned cabin. I'm sure well close proximity. That's what that one's called. Sounds a little bit better. Stuck together. Snowed in it's definitely one

**Erin** 29:21

Forbidden love.

**Celia** 29:21

Forbidden love. Amnesia. Um, yeah, yeah, there's a lot in there. Very fun. Well, thanks all this gives us a lot of stuff to add to our on TBR piles.

**Erin** 29:37

Yeah, I just I added all of your recommendations to

**Celia** 29:43

Alright, thanks for listening.

**Erin** 29:44

Thank you so much for joining us.