



Book Gang Podcast Transcript: The Scandalous Women Who Started It All

Gill Paul (00:00)

I'm Gill Paul, the author of many historical novels including Scandalous Women.

Amy's Warm Intro:

Hey, Book Gang! Every year, no matter how determined I am to read every book featured on our book lists, a few inevitably slip through the cracks. That's exactly what happened with Gill Paul's *Scandalous Women*, which I had featured on our Books About Authors and Publishing list when this book launched. I stumbled onto the story again while browsing audiobooks on Hoopla and was instantly reminded of why its premise—a true, behind-the-scenes look at the publishing world—had me so excited to add this to my TBR in the first place. *Scandalous Women* became my first Gill Paul novel, and the moment I finished, I knew it was a perfect fit for *Book Gang*. It's a dazzling deep-dive into the electric 1960s, when trailblazers like Jacqueline Susann and Jackie Collins crashed through the gates of the literary establishment and redefined what women's stories could be.

Back then, stories about women's pleasure or ambition were labeled "trashy" and dismissed—even by feminists who should have known better. One could say that the same is true today. But Susann's *Valley of the Dolls* burst onto shelves in 1966, raw and unfiltered, speaking to a generation hungry for truth about desire. Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, Jackie Collins crashed through taboos with *The World Is Full of Married Men*, proving that honest, racy storytelling could ignite a cultural firestorm. Paul's genius is bringing these two authors together in one dazzling narrative. While this overlap was very much imagined, it was not impossible, as these women's orbits often overlapped, making the possibility of an imagined meeting feel thrilling.

Through the keen perspective of Nancy White, a fictional editorial assistant carving out her place in a man's world, Paul immerses you in the high-stakes world of publishing, including those catty closed-door meetings in the office where executives got fat off the profit, but refused to admit these books were real literature. As you'll discover in this week's interview, this character was very much inspired by Peggy in *Mad Men* and beautifully executed.

You'll get to witness Susann's relentless drive—her obsessive drafting process (five different colored drafts!), her knack for connecting with booksellers, and how she basically helped invent the modern book tour. At the same time, you're right there alongside Jackie Collins as she dares the publishing world to keep up with her vision. Gill Paul brings these women to life with such vivid detail, you'll feel like you're right in the room with them.

But the glamour comes at a cost. Susann's personal story is marked by heartbreak—her son's diagnosis with autism at a time when mothers were wrongly blamed, enduring the cruelty of the "refrigerator mother" myth that blamed mothers because they were too cold, haunted her. She faced judgment and stigma even as she chased success. Her resilience lays bare the hidden costs for women blazing trails in the public eye and the motives for her driven nature. Paul captures this complexity with great empathy and nuance.

These women weren't saints, and that's the fun of it. The wild drug and drinking habits, the late-night parties, the infamous TV clashes with other literary celebrities like Truman Capote—Paul doesn't shy from the messiness that made these icons legendary. If you want to see them in action, cue up those classic YouTube late-night clips for some fun.

The Jackies turbulent beginnings and Nancy's evolution add real, beating-heart stakes beneath all that literary glitz. And Paul's lush, sensory detail—brought to life by Lisa Flanagan's pitch-perfect audiobook narration—transports you straight into the wild heart of the era.

If you're new here, Hi! I'm Amy Allen Clark, the voice behind the Book Gang podcast. This podcast celebrates debuts, backlist books, and under-the-radar book gems. I am so happy to have you here!

Just a reminder, you're warmly invited to our Patreon Book Club chat on April 30th at 8 PM ET, where we'll dive into *The Sunflower Boys* by Sam Wachman together on Zoom. For a deeper look into the story and what you can expect, check out last week's episode featuring my conversation with Sam. If you've been searching for a welcoming, multigenerational book club, this is the perfect place to join. Membership is just \$5 a month, or you can prepay for the year and save 10%. This month, members will also receive a 34-page April reading guide featuring 16 reviews of buzzy new books, the latest book adaptation news, and a shopping list for April's new releases.

In today's conversation, Gill Paul pulls back the curtain on *Scandalous Women* in a way that feels both deeply researched and wonderfully intimate, giving us not just the glittering surface of the 1960s publishing world, but the machinery underneath it. We talk about her own path from working inside publishing to becoming an international bestselling author, and how that insider perspective shaped the way she approached this novel, particularly in reimaging the lives of Jacqueline Susann and Jackie Collins—two women who didn't just dominate the bestseller lists, but fundamentally shifted what women could write about and what readers were hungry to see on the page.

To celebrate Gill's book, I have updated our Books About Authors and Publishing book list with 43 titles, including upcoming releases, new release picks, and some of my favorite backlist gems like this one. Patrons will receive a printable checklist for their next library day and a bonus conversation with Gill to unlock, where we dish on all the fun and surprising gossip in this story.

Now let's meet this week's guest: Gill Paul is the author of thirteen historical novels, which have sold over a million copies, hit the top five in the USA Today, Wall Street Journal, and Toronto Globe & Mail bestseller lists, and have been translated into twenty-four languages.

Gill lives in London, where she swims year-round in a wild pond, and speaks at libraries and festivals on topics ranging from King Tut to the Romanovs. *Scandalous Women* is available on store shelves now.

One final thing: if you love this show, leaving a review on iTunes is a free way to support my work. And to our patrons who keep Book Gang running, thank you for funding the kind of conversations that would've gotten us side-eyed in a 1960s boardroom. I'm grateful you support human creators in a world turned upside down by AI! Now let's get chatting!

(transition music)

Amy Clark (00:08)

Book Gang, we are so excited to have Gill Paul here. This is exciting because we get to introduce you to her backlist novel, Scandalous Women, and this book was published in 2024. I want to mention that I was able to read this through Hoopla, so I would encourage you if you have that app through your local library that that's a really great spot to find it. And the audiobook by Lisa Flanagan is exceptional, so I'm excited for you to get to interact with this experience.

This to me is a perfect summer read for any reader. But I thought for our icebreaker today, I wanted to hear about your experience with the authors that you featured in this book and maybe if you could pick a book from each of these women who you'd recommend

Gill Paul (00:57)

Hi Amy, thank you so much for inviting me on today. I'm really thrilled to be here. My novel is about Jacqueline Susann and Jackie Collins. Now Jacqueline Susann was the author of Valley of the Dolls, a completely groundbreaking book when it came out in 1966. And during the time period covered by my novel, she wrote four other books as well. But I think Valley of the Dolls is the classic that if you want to learn anything about her and about the 60s, you have to go back to that one to try and understand the huge scandal it caused at the time it was published. And it was phenomenal. It was attacked by everybody from all sides, left, right, you know, religious, non-religious, feminists, you name it. They all had to go at her.

And with Jackie Collins, I read, I used to steal my dad's copies of her books when I was a teenager and look up the sexy bits in them. But for the purposes of this novel, I focused on the three novels that she had written in the period I'm writing about. And they're not that great. If you want to Jackie Collins, I would say skip to her 1980s books, Hollywood Wives, super famous one, and the Lucky Santangelo books, which start with Lucky. There's the series. That's what I would recommend that you do with Jackie. She really found her stride by then.

Amy Clark (02:14)

I love that. You know, I remember stealing my mother's books and my mom had this box in the basement of Harlequin romances and I would take a few off the top and then hide them under my mattress. And I also remember her having Jackie Collins books. So when I dug into this, I was really transported back into my own memories. And maybe some of our Gen X readers might feel the same as me that that was a real process of discovery for

me about just how fun books could be and the idea that you you could see that on a page was like I don't know revelatory in its own right but especially in the time period that you're covering.

I want to get into a little bit about you because you know a lot of writers dream of publishing a book but you are coming to us and I want to say this because so many people love to dig in someone with a really big backlist. You have 13 books out. When you look back at your debut, what do you think you understand about the industry that maybe you didn't then?

Gill Paul (03:33)

I got my first deal in 1999. I was first published, my first novel was published in 2000 and I just thought I'd got it made. I thought this is amazing. I'll be a novelist now. I'll just write a book a year and the readership will grow with every book.

And I got a two book deal the first time and they didn't renew the contract. So I had two novels published and then they didn't want the third. And this is a really common story, Amy. It happens to a lot of novelists. You know, publishers take a punt. And if you don't fly into the bestseller list, they're not going to invest in you the way they did back in the 1920s. Publishers used to invest in authors like Fitzgerald and Hemingway and bankroll them until they managed to have a successful book. Doesn't work that way anymore.

So I got dropped after my second novel but I then went on and I wrote a lot of non-fiction. I have published a lot of non-fiction books, some of them historical, some of them about nutrition and health. You name it, I've written about it. I had a big long series called Love Stories of different books. The first one was looking at the historical stories behind the honeymoon couples who sailed on the Titanic. I found out all I could about them, their stories and what happened to them on the ship and that night. And then the publisher loved that so I went on. I published about eight books in that series I think.

So non-fiction was my thing, but the centenary of the sinking of the Titanic was coming along in 2012 and I'd already written the non-fiction book and my partner said to me you know you want to get back to novel writing why not write a Titanic novel so I sent out a proposal and it got picked up by a publisher and then I was back into back into the novels again and I've sort of been almost one a year since then which is great. I'm very glad he encouraged me to do that.

Amy Clark (05:23)

Oh my gosh, that's amazing. I think to speaking to your headspace, it's really interesting to me that you can pivot into that nonfiction, but also I would imagine nonfiction gives

you a great bridge for your historical fiction because you are doing that for another book or another project and then you can build on those ideas and concepts and truly build an immersive world for a reader.

Gill Paul (05:49)

Sure, I mean, no writing is ever wasted. You, it's just, you have to just keep using that muscle in lots of different ways, I think, in order to grow as a writer, hopefully.

Amy Clark (06:01)

Yeah, well I know that you've also worked as an editor, so I feel like that's a very interesting aspect to your work and especially it ties into this book itself because we are getting behind the scenes of publishing and I'm wondering what it's like having that knowledge from both sides of the desk. What are some things readers or even aspiring writers often misunderstand about the book publishing process?

Gill Paul (06:27)

The first thing as an author to understand is that most books don't make money. Only about between 10 and 20 percent of books actually make a profit. The rest of the time the publisher is just taking a gamble and all these gambles are bankrolled by the huge authors like Frieda McFadden and John Grisham and Stephen King. know, the rest of the time they're just guessing and they really spend a lot less on market research than any other industry. You know, you know, if Kraft wants to introduce a new kind of mac and cheese, they do masses of focus groups. Publishers do very little of that kind of research. They're just sitting in their offices thinking, I think this is a good idea.

But I'm also very understanding of it, I wasn't with my first novel. I thought the person that had been assigned to help me with publicity was just my person going forwards and I could just email her and she would reply, in fact you've only got them for a little window of two weeks or something like that before they're moving on to the next book and they don't really want you pestering them six months later saying can you pitch this to a newspaper for me can you do this can you do that no you had your two weeks that's I understand that now

Amy Clark (07:36)

Yeah, it's a learning curve, right? I did a nonfiction book and I think when, well, for me, my experience was that they were merging publishers, of course, the month that my book is coming out and I lost my points of contact and they had said they were going to do all these things with a media tour. And that's what they print too, right? On those galley copies, you can see on the back, you know, could be in this and this and this and this, and then nothing happened with it.

And I was like left to my own devices.

And I think as a first time writer, it was, it was disappointing. Because you think, these people are here to work for me and that's the process. But it was such an eye-opening experience and I often talk behind the scenes between the shows with debut novelists and there is often a lot of confusion. Although I will say, I think the debut novelists are the most supported. Do you think that's true?

Gill Paul (08:32)

Possibly, but they put the most money behind the big authors. Unless they really have a lot of confidence in a debut, they'll just kind of throw it out there and see what happens.

Amy Clark (08:35)

Yeah. Okay, yeah, because I feel like maybe they're, they're taking a gamble a little bit on a new writer. And so they're trying to, you know, put that money forth and the time and the marketing at the beginning, but then that sophomore book comes out and it's like, you know, crickets for a lot of people.

Gill Paul (08:58)

Mm-hmm. Yeah. No, I try not to because I know what the other side is like. I always try not to be a diva. I don't think anybody could accuse me of being a diva.

Amy Clark (09:07)

So, regarding the publishing industry, what do you think has changed over this last decade?

Gill Paul (09:14)

It's constantly in flux. Over the last decade, I would say that readers have changed a lot. I think they've got much shorter attention spans. They now want to be grabbed by a hook in the first chapter, even in the first paragraph, you need to kind of draw them in. And so I think a lot of authors are changing the way they write to have a huge impact first chapter. Also, the types that people are reading changes all the time and the biographical historical fiction that I've written eight or nine books in that genre is not so popular at the moment.

So I've done a little pivot to a different style recently but you just have to watch the market to an extent and figure out. I mean you can't jump on bandwagons because by the time you're reading about a book that's coming out that bandwagons past You know you're looking two years ahead of whatever you're starting to write now, but try and just keep an account of trends and a good agent will help you with this as well.

Amy Clark (10:17)

Yes, I completely agree. You know, it is interesting to me because I do think the ways that readers are reading now, they do need to be, you know, we're used to TikTok content and we're used to those 15 second videos that are going to pull you in like in the first few seconds and we will just slide past if it doesn't provide that kind of thing. And I think maybe for me, for like a more slowed down life. I often want to read those like 90s books, the 2000s, even the 2000s books. Those books are providing like a little bit more of that, you know, longevity, that long languished like ending, you know, in the long build at the beginning. And I sometimes crave that. And I feel like we're often thrown right into the action now because that's what this next generation of readers is expecting.

Gill Paul (11:09)

Yeah, I mean it's a process. If you look back at Tolstoy, War and Peace or something like that, he'll have 30 pages straight about Russian agricultural methods. And I don't really want to read that either.

Amy Clark (11:17)

It's true, there has to be a good balance between those things. Well, I wanted to ask you, for writers who are currently trying to break in, what advice would you give about building a more sustainable career rather than just that one book deal?

Gill Paul (11:25)

Yeah. My advice would be to keep working on your skill set. So you can do courses, you can read. There's so many great books about craft, but just keep trying. Get into a group. Certainly it's a group where somebody will read, you know, or you've got various friends that will read and give you honest feedback. Not devastating feedback, not the kind that has you sobbing long into the night, but just useful, critical, constructive feedback, I think is so important.

And then keep challenging yourself. If you've written one novel that's in one genre, kind of push it a bit the next time. Try and have something more character led than plot led. And I always like to just feel that each novel is going to challenge me. I don't want to coast along because, you know, it's a truism to say that writing is a muscle and the more you actually use that muscle, the more you strengthen it. So, you know, just the more skills you can pick up and, you know, choose your sub carefully look at what's going to be current and topical and you do need to have the pitch line the elevator pitch nowadays the sort of 30 seconds this is why you should buy my book it's very hard to do but you're going to need it at various stages you know when you're getting an agent when you're

getting a publisher then when you're trying to promote your book to bookshops and readers and so forth

Amy Clark (13:00)

I love this advice. Thank you so much. Listeners. I do want to warn you. The electric guys came by the house right before we were going to record to tell me they're going to trim back some, some branches. So if you hear that in the background, just pretend like you're hanging out with me at my house with the branches coming down in my backyard. had a windstorm in Indiana and they're trying to repair it. So I apologize if you hear any noise going on. I have pillows all around me, but I just want to mention it because it's always hard when you hear people's background noises when you're talking. Okay good good. Well Gill, let's talk about this novel. This is a fascinating story of women from history. I wanted to ask you what first drew you to the story behind the two Jackies and how did this project begin?

Gill Paul (13:35)

I had an editor at William Morrow through eight books and as soon as I finished one I used to just send her a load of ideas and we'd talk backwards and forwards and I was looking for one when a reader messaged me on Instagram and said that my novel Manhattan Girls which had just come out was her second favourite book in the world. I went okay what's your top favourite book in the world and she said Valley of the Dolls. Now I'd never read Valley of the Dolls but when I was working in publishing way back when, I had read the Barbara Seaman biography of Jacqueline Susann called Lovely Me and I just vaguely remembered that there was a very strong story there that very difficult things had happened in her life. And so I went back and had another look at that.

Now, I publish in the US and the UK, and so I'm always looking for transatlantic ideas. And that's the reason that I decided to look at Jackie Collins, who was her first novel came out just the year after Valley of the Dolls. And first of all, I thought to myself, was she copying Jacqueline Susann? I think she slightly was. Although it's a very different book, her first one, The World is Full of Married Men is quite short and quite different from Valley of the Dolls. But I think she got the idea that these sexy books that speak to the problems that women have in their lives but with a bit of aspirational glamour thrown in as well could be a good idea. So I put the two together, you know, pitched it to my editor at the time and she said yes let's do this so that's how it came about.

Amy Clark (15:38)

Oh my goodness, well what did you think about Valley of the Dolls when you read it for the first time?

Gill Paul (15:42)

If it was coming out nowadays, it would have a huge edit. Structurally, it's very flawed. Almost half the book is just one point of view and then she starts switching into other points of view. It's got a lot that you could cut. I mean, you really could cut it down by a third if you were going to. The storylines are just very gripping; women getting addicted to uppers and downers and competing in a men's world and the real vulnerability of women as they try to enter into these you know show business and television and worlds that were dominated completely by men in that era.

Amy Clark (16:23)

I am endlessly fascinated. I feel like I'm going to have to read this book. I have not read it, so I wanted to hear what your impressions were, but I just recently had a listener talk about how she just read it and just wants to talk to someone about it because I think, you know, it's interesting. I think digging into the backstory on this and how it was made and why it was made and what you know it helped her achieve is so fascinating. I mean there's so many little tidbits that we're gonna talk about here but you know it's such a like revolutionary thing for women to be talking about what happens in bedrooms which was not talked about on the page.

Gill Paul (17:06)

I mean it's not graphic, you know, in 2026, the year that we're talking, readers are used to much more graphic stuff. You know, there's a famous kind of swimming pool scene in Valley of the Dolls, so I flicked to that and it's just, it's just they had sex in a swimming pool. There's nothing more detailed than that. But that was really shocking for the time.

Amy Clark (17:21)

Ha. Yeah, that makes sense. I mean, they would just die if they had they had some of these these spicy romances that are available on shelves now. I mean, yeah, I think about the things that I was so drawn to, you know, they are so, you know, tame in comparison, I'm thinking like Judy Blume, for example, her book and in comparison to what we have access to now is quite different. But at the time, it was revolutionary to even refer to that or even to women's pleasure in general.

Gill Paul (17:34)

Yeah.

Amy Clark (17:56)

I'd love to talk about your research process. What did this look like for this book?

Gill Paul (18:00)

There were a lot of biographies and newspaper articles about Jacqueline Susann but in fact I started the night that we agreed that I was going to write this I sat down and went through YouTube and watched all their television chat show interviews and there's millions of them because they really put themselves out there to promote their books and I could not believe how hostile the interviewers were to them women as well as men really criticizing them for you know their moral standards and what example were they setting to children. It's quite horrendous the way that they were attacked.

And yet they still put themselves out there for more. Yeah, that's where I started. Then I read the biographies of Jacqueline Susann and all the press clippings I could find. With Jackie Collins, there isn't actually a biography yet, but a woman called Laura Ferry made an absolutely brilliant documentary called Lady Boss, which has got Jackie's daughters on it. It's got her sister Joan and friends who knew her just talking about her life and her work and her death as well and it's absolutely brilliant it's really really well done.

Amy Clark (19:15)

Oh my gosh, I'm going to watch that. I am absolutely going to watch that. I do love too that you have these, you know, real figures, but then you decided to add a fictional editorial assistant named Nancy, who is, really giving us that inside scoop on what's happening behind the scenes, like in the conference rooms with the men while they're talking about these books and bashing them, but yet they're all getting fed and happy off the profits. So I'd love for you to share a little bit about what role you felt like she played in the story and maybe what aspects of that environment surprised you.

Gill Paul (19:54)

Well, Nancy was the most autobiographical character I've ever written, to be honest. That was me. I came down to London straight from university and got a very junior editorial job in publishing in an era where men did act the way that they're acting in my novel. But I was also partly inspired by Did You Watch the Series Mad Men? I absolutely loved it, set in advertising. And I love Peggy in there.

Amy Clark (20:18)

Yes! She's my favorite.

Gill Paul (20:23)

She starts as a secretary and works her way up and she's got to be better than the men to get that promotion much better and even still they expect her to make the tea at meetings and she's supposed to be glamorous and yeah, noticed that. She was a brilliant character, she was definitely in my mind but also my own memories of working in publishing back then. That's really what it was like.

Amy Clark (20:46)

Oh my goodness. That's a lot. That is a lot. How did you handle that?

Gill Paul (20:49)

How did I handle it at the time? I just was quite feisty I think. I became a union representative and they made me the equality officer for the union. So yeah, yeah. I was, I did.

Amy Clark (20:56)

Okay. Well, you've weathered it fine then. Yeah, yeah, no, Peggy is my favorite character on Mad Men. I did get Peggy vibes from Nancy. So yeah, that's a great muse for anyone who is interested in learning more about what that's like. But I thought she was such a great inside source into really bringing the reader behind the scenes and how they're talking about the women often not in front of them. You know, these are private meetings that are happening about the book, but we also get these dishy little tidbits on how the book gets made.

And I want to talk about an early scene that you had where Jacqueline's writing process is so fascinating to me. There's so much to unbox with her process and how, future forward she was thinking about her career, always like thinking about sales and her, really thinking more, I think, than it wasn't just a book, but it was, you know, the goal is to make money and to sustain her family. So her writing process I want to share is five separate drafts. It says the first draft was on white paper the bare bones. Second draft on yellow paper characterization. Third draft on pink paper for story and fourth on blue paper to cut anything extraneous. And then the fifth on that expensive white paper that got turned in. And I think this it was so interesting to me because these details really show us she is meticulous, she has a process. What were you most interested to uncover about all of that?

Gill Paul (22:38)

Oh well. Authors are all fascinated by each other's process so that was brilliant for me. I loved that she described this. She was very resistant to any editorial changes. She had quite an experienced editor in the house and he kept suggesting things and she'd overrule him the whole time. Maybe she shouldn't have but that was just her way. She knew what she wanted in this book. She knew what she wanted for the cover and she knew what she wanted for the PR tour that you know just I'm so in admiration of her about is the way she set out on her road show and befriended booksellers.

She had a Rolodex in which she kept all their details. Every bookshop she went into she remembered their names, their wives names, their children's names, their pets names, their birthdays and she bought them little gifts and she kept it all filed so that next time she went into that same shop she could say Hi Sam. It must be Junior's eighth birthday now, how's he doing? So the personal touch. She was seemingly influenced by a book that came out around this time in the 60s by Dale Carnegie, How to Win Friends and Influence People.

And the main thing, which is a great tip for any of us, is ask somebody a question about themselves and remember the answer and refer to it next time you're speaking to them. it makes them feel really seen and heard. And that's what she did. But she made it into little industry with her Rolodex.

Amy Clark (24:15)

My goodness. Did this change you a little bit? Like learning about this? Did it make you more aware of your processor? Have you always been a thoughtful giver like this?

Gill Paul (24:24)

I'm quite shy so I've never gone into book shops and or well I have occasionally but I always feel very icky about it or going into a book shop and saying Hi I'm Gill Paul you've got my books here do you want me shall I sign them for you? That just makes me cringe. Most authors are introverts so that's really counterintuitive for us but Jacqueline was a performer she'd been an actress she'd been on television as a presenter so she just took all those skills and she went into book shops and she charmed the pants off them. She just went for it.

Amy Clark (24:57)

Yeah. That's an extrovert for you. They will find out those little details, but I think that really shows even for today. These ways that we interact with booksellers are so important and this is an example of ways that I've seen. I have local friends who've gone on to become incredible authors and they do make such an effort. I can see that with really establishing those relationships and making sure those things happen in book stores and it's fun to reminisce and think about that you know someone like this was really paving the path for that to be part of the etiquette of reading and sharing books and being authors.

Gill Paul (25:41)

Absolutely. And if she hadn't done that, if she'd just sat back at home and waited to get the reviews of her book, nobody would have bought it because they were devastatingly cruel, the critics, you know, they just called it a pile of junk and, you know, don't waste your

time. So she had to reach out directly to the public or she wouldn't have sold. But you know, she did. She'd sold Valley of the Dolls, has sold 31 million copies, making it one of the most successful bestselling books of all time. I mean, it's really up there with, you know, Paulo Coelho's The Alchemist and Harry Potter. It really is. And the kind of the all time number of copies sold.

Amy Clark (26:22)

It's incredible. So I'd love to talk about the motives for Jacqueline and why it was so essential for her to be a success in publishing. We read that her son was diagnosed with Kanner Syndrome and it's a doctor whose research claimed that parents of children with this syndrome were often, you know, cold, they were uncaring. And there was a term that I think was really like jarring to me. They were referred to as refrigerator moms to describe them. I am a mom of an autistic child. So I was absolutely horrified to hear about this and how it was being put on the mother and how heartbreaking this aspect to a diagnosis story was. Could you talk a little bit about the research on her motherhood journey and the stigmatism that you saw surrounding this diagnosis?

Gill Paul (27:19)

Absolutely. And just by chance, a relative of mine was diagnosed with autism around about the time that I was writing this, so I did read a lot on the subject. It was in 1943 that a Dr. Kanner first described the syndrome of extreme autism, children who were non-verbal, who didn't interact with their carers or parents at all, and who used sort of self-comforting, repetitive gestures, maybe hand flapping or whatever. Stimming they call it now.

And he and other people looking at his research said they thought it was because the parents were cold with their children. And this term came about refrigerator moms. Absolutely devastating. And of course, we now know it has nothing at all to do with the way that children have been nurtured as babies. But Jacqueline and her husband Irving clearly found the diagnosis very hard to deal with and in fact Irving wrote a biography of Jacqueline after she died and he said that it was his impression that the nurse that they'd hired took their baby to the park one morning when he was one and a half years old, 18 months, and he said he thinks the nurse dropped him on his head because when they came back from the park.

The child was never the same again. He cried all the time. He wouldn't make eye contact. He wouldn't be soothed. There was nothing they could do with him. And Irving actually went back to that park to try and find witnesses who had seen the child being dropped on his head because he just couldn't believe that, you know, that their son could have something so devastating wrong with them that the experts didn't seem to be able to do

anything about. And they had money. They tried lots of top doctors. They took him for consultations all over the place.

And they looked after him at home until he was, I think, about four when they were advised that his problems were so severe that he would be better within a specialist facility where they could try to help to stimulate him and keep him calm. Jacqueline took him and put him into this hospital for the first time, she had a bit of a breakdown afterwards. There were several weeks where she just didn't get out of bed; drank and took pills the whole time and couldn't handle it at all. But then she realized that the fees for the very top hospitals and they wanted nothing but the best for their son were very high and that's why she had to write a bestseller and keep writing bestsellers to subsidise her son's care. So yeah it was utterly devastating for them and that scientists could then blame them, blame her, say it was her fault for being a refrigerator mum. It's just unbelievable.

Amy Clark (30:10)

Yeah, you know, there was even, you know, 20 years ago when my child was diagnosed, there was not nearly as much information and, just as a parent, not really we had never experienced anything like this. We didn't know anyone who had a child like our child. And it was just this one of the scariest, hardest things that I had went through as a mom. And the first thing, you know, you think about is what did I not do for my kid? Did I give them enough stimulation was I not, you know, and our child had been flagged at six months because they were, you know, not making, baby sounds and there was, not eye contact that we could not, we, at one point we thought that they may be deaf because they were not turning to us. And it was just this whole very scary process. And I put enough blame on myself through that process that I didn't anyone else outside to say, you know, this was like because as a mother you just want the most and the best for your kid and so little was known at that point and I just have so much grace for any mother that was generations ahead of me that was under this type of scrutiny because I was under my own scrutiny and I didn't even have an outside person saying that to me.

Gill Paul (31:33)

That's so hard. suppose mothers always do think it's their fault somehow they should have been able to fix things but you know so many things you just can't fix.

Amy Clark (31:42)

Yeah. Yeah. And the idea to coin a term refrigerator mom is definitely something that I think a lot of book clubs could talk about is that as our kids, were some stigmas around some of the things that you dealt with as a parent or what we're still learning and understanding because, you know, the health field is continuing to evolve. We are still,

you know, examining autism in, you know, frightening ways, frankly, that I don't think are necessary. And so, it goes back to we do not need to blame mothers in this process and I think it's such an important and relevant conversation even now.

I was also surprised to discover on a lighter note this is an author that gave us our first nationwide book tour ever and that this was coming from Jacqueline. So this decision has changed all of our reading lives. It's how we interact with authors now. Did you know this before researching this book?

Gill Paul (32:41)

I slightly exaggerated there had been a book tour for Helen Gurley Brown's Sex and the Single Girl.

Amy Clark (32:47)

Okay.

Gill Paul (32:48)

Helen was a friend of Jacqueline so I'm sure she got the idea from that but you know she turned it into an industry and also because she and Irving had such contacts in the media she was not just going into bookshops and doing events she was going on the Johnny Carson show she was going on radio stations she made friends with all the the talk show hosts so she was pretty well covering all the media at the time and she didn't, you know, if she got a book banned and if one bookshop in Idaho decided that they weren't going to stock the book, she would make a newspaper story out of it.

And, you know, once she went on the chat shows, she was always very sparkly, confrontational. She wore this uniform of the putchy jumpsuit with the patterns and the huge hair and the huge eyelashes. And she just went out there to do battles. She wasn't taking anything from anyone. And she got her message across. She was a real pro about it.

Amy Clark (33:48)

That's amazing. I love that this has been like something that we can still see, you know, authors joining talk shows and really being on the circuit in the way that they are. It started somewhere and she's one of the pioneers that helped establish that. Obviously Jackie Collins plays a big part in the story too. I will say Jacqueline does take, I feel like more of a shine, just probably just her story was so inspiring to Jackie and then later her career develops around that. You know, she was writing about sex and power and glamorous lives long before that was also widely accepted. How did you approach portraying her early career and the risks that she took? And maybe do you have a favorite Jackie moment?

Gill Paul (34:32)

They were quite different in their approach really, but the similarity is that, I mean, the 60s is supposed to be the time when everybody was having free love and talking about sex. So that's why it's puzzling that it was still so scandalous for women to actually write books about sex. I mean, Harold Robbins had been doing it. were a couple of, know, Peyton Place back in the 50s had had its moments, had its sexy moments.

But the fact that women got pleasure from sex, this was the new thing. women had been portrayed in the past as you know they're supposed to hold on to their virginity for marriage or they're supposed to get money for it or get something out of letting the man pleasure himself but both of their heroines are like hey we like sex too going for it and it's quite revolutionary when you look at it that way it's kind of overturning society it's not just you know the man's right to have his wife submit to him at Jackie moment and there are many and I'm presuming you mean real life ones not in the books but I love that story which I did use in fact it happened in LA and I moved it to London a guy on a motorbike came up to her held a gun in the window and asked her to hand over her purse and instead of you know panicking and freezing as I would have done she put her foot on the accelerator and got away from him and I just think that's extraordinary and so brave? Possibly a bit foolish, I'm not sure.

But no, she was very big and feisty. And in Britain, I don't know whether this was such a big deal in the States, but when she was dying, she kept it very, very to herself right up to the end. And she'd had a book come out here and she came over to promote it two weeks before she died. And that's when she had lunch with her sister Joan in the Ritz and told her that she had breast cancer. And she went on a TV show called it's a kind of lunchtime talk show, women's talk show called *Loose Women*. And she went on there and it's quite a shocking clip to watch because she's so thin and haggard, but she was just sparkly and fun as ever. And she flew back to L.A. and died 10 days later. And I thought, my gosh, she just kept going right to the end. So.

Amy Clark (36:49)

Yeah, she died doing what she loved, And yeah, that's incredibly inspiring to hear. She's such a larger than life woman. I do feel like both of these women have such big personalities. And it takes a big personality, think, because they had to really fight for their place in the world. And it really shows on the page these experiences that are their lived experiences that you were able to really translate for fiction readers.

Gill Paul (36:51)

Yeah. No, they were huge and, you know, they wore the huge shoulder pads and the huge hair and the huge eyelashes. I think from watching all the clips, I think Jackie Collins is less brave. You can see sometimes when she's attacked with questions that she flinches and is a bit shocked at the hostility she's getting. But Jacqueline Susann just went out there battling.

There's a clip on British television where Barbara Cartland, the romantic novelist appeared on a TV chat show with Jackie Collins and at one point she turned round and she said, you're responsible for all the perverts in Britain. And Jackie really looked stunned at this and she said, well, I didn't mean to. And then later kind of she said, well, you know, maybe I'm maybe I'm proud of that, but, know, I don't accept this. And, yeah, she was very taken aback.

Amy Clark (37:58)

Oh my god. That is so funny and it is so funny to think about too when I think about the 60s that everything was so free love that are also elements that were really surprising like women didn't know that they could have their own pleasure but also you know talking to another novelist who wrote a 1960s set story she shared like women didn't know anything about their bodies how they worked they didn't know you know the baby scoop era was happening, you know, babies were, you know, girls were being sent away to maternity homes. No one really educated them on anything. And so while, this idea that everything was like hippie and cool and interesting, it's like, there's also this very real fact that women just didn't know anything about their bodies.

Gill Paul (38:59)

And free love, you know, it works for the men, it doesn't work so well for women. We're too vulnerable in that situation. You know, OK, they have the pill, but there's many other things that can go wrong. Jacqueline Susann shows that more in her novels. Her women are vulnerable. They get addicted to pills. They get into trouble trying to make their way in a male dominated environment. Whereas Jackie Collins women, she once said she once compared her heroines to she said, Harold Robbins' women are in the kitchen or they're in the bedroom. She said, mine get on top whether they're in the bedroom or in the boardroom. And it's true. You know, hers always come out the winners at the end of the novels. They're not vulnerable. They're kind of, they're gritty and they can do it.

Amy Clark (39:37)

I love that. Well, what do you hope readers will take away about Jacqueline Susann and Jackie Collins after finishing your novel?

Gill Paul (39:56)

Just how incredibly brave they both were and hardworking and a real kind of sign of the times when women still had to fight. You know, they helped each generation of women has helped to push the barriers back just a little bit more women like them. And you can find them in the 60s, the 70s, 80s, going way back to the suffragettes and before that. And they definitely did their part in helping to open up the whole field of publishing for women writers like myself coming along afterwards and being able to write a little sex scene in my historicals. don't do that much, but you know when the story needs it. And for all the writers of romantacy for Fifty Shades of Grey, for whatever, just women can write whatever they want, whatever they feel other women want to read.

Amy Clark (40:46)

Do you think they'd love BookTok?

Gill Paul (40:49)

They would definitely be on BookTok. I mean, I imagine them nowadays, they were so tuned in to what people, what readers wanted that I imagine they would be writing about mermaids and orcs and dragons at the moment having mad lizard sex or whatever. And they would have social media managers. They wouldn't be sitting doing the graphics themselves. Somebody else would be managing it for them, but they'd be great on TikTok, both of them.

Amy Clark (41:18)

I love imagining them with a rich social media life. I just know they would be the real ultimate influencers for sure in the literary scene. Well Gill, what can we expect from you next in your writing career? Tell me what you are up to so we can connect all the dots for readers that want to dig into your new books too.

Gill Paul (41:21)

I have just written a contemporary women's novel, which is set in the world of publishing again, funnily enough, and it's with my agent at the moment. It's provisionally titled, The Insider's Guide, but my titles always get changed, Amy. I never get to my original titles. I don't know what it is. So, yeah, so watch this space. I don't know when that one's coming out yet.

Amy Clark (41:54)

Okay. Well, luckily we have many, many books to get into with you and listeners, I want to let you know before we end this segment that Gill's going to join me on the other side. We're going to, we have a gossip section. This is Hollywood gossip and we don't want to spoil all the fun surprises, but I have to talk through some of the bigger scenes in the story. And I thought it would be really fun to have a little feature on the other side. And

that is \$5 a month. And that goes to keeping us commercial free and giving space to people like Gill to be, to tell their stories.

But as we close out here, Gill, I would love to hear what's making you proud right now, whether it's with books or with your life in general. And it also gives me a chance to say thank you. I love getting to meet you. This has been such a delight. And I know you said that you're incredibly shy and you do not do the bookstore thing, but you were the first author who came back to me and said, I went and browsed around on your website and I looked into your career.

I loved things about it and I just really appreciate the ways that you also acknowledge the people who are hosting you. So thank you for that. But I would love to hear what's making you proud right now.

Gill Paul (43:15)

I am incredibly lucky to have had the career that I've had so far. It's not easy to stay in this business and you've got to kind of jump and run around and pivot a bit to keep going so I am very proud of that. But you know what, it's spring in London, it's absolutely gorgeous, that's what makes me happy. I swim in a freezing cold pond every day and so I see all the changing of the season and the little buds coming out and the blossoms and it's just so sparkly and vivid and wonderful at this time of year that's making me happy.

Amy Clark (43:50)

Gill, I want to come visit you. It's not so fun and springy here in Indiana.

Gill Paul (43:51)

Thank you so much though Amy, you just had the best questions and it's been really really good fun talking to you.

Amy Clark (44:03)

It is a delight. Well friends, I will meet you on the other side.

Amy Clark (44:03)

All right, listeners, if you are here, you are behind the paywall for our gossip section where we're going to talk through the back half of Scandalous Women. I just want to remind you that if you have not finished this book, please do not open this section because we are going to spoil this book royally. First of all, our first question we always ask authors behind here is now that we can talk about the whole book, what was the most challenging scene for you to write,

Gill Paul (44:36)

The most challenging I think was a scene in which Nancy's cousin Louise has a psychotic drug induced episode. But it is something that I know a bit about because I have a friend who suffers psychotic episodes and I've tried to hold her hand through it. For those who don't know or have experienced this, the brain just goes into meltdown and they don't know who they can trust. They think people are trying to brainwash them, are trying to harm them.

Even though this person has been a close friend of mine for a long time, she doesn't even know whether it's safe to trust me. So we now have a codeword which only she and I know which we will use when she's psychotic and usually it calms her down, but it's just such a difficult, difficult thing to manage. I was fascinated as a teenager by mental health and madness and I read a lot of books about it. You know, Sylvia Plath, The Bell Jar and The Yellow Wallpaper and in particular Dorothy Parker, who I've also written about the 1920s wit of the Algonquin

in the round table who also struggled with her mental health and with depression and actually attempted suicide twice during the was only when I was talking about that recently to a book group that I suddenly realized why I was so fascinated by this in my teens. It was, I used to read everything I could get my hands on because I had an aunt, my dad's sister, who suffered from depression, who spent some time in a mental hospital and who died when I was 18 of what my mum called an accidental overdose of her sleeping pills.

And I suppose as a teenager I was reading all these books about madness in an effort to understand her and in fact I did a bit of a loop. I'd studied medicine at university thinking that I was going to go into psychiatry. I wanted to be a psychiatrist. Turned out to be completely the wrong thing for me. And I got out. I got out and the world is very lucky that I didn't become a doctor. But yeah, mental health has always been a big interest of mine. So when I decided that, you know, with all the people taking pills in the 1960s and in Jacqueline Susann's novels in particular, I wanted to show what can happen with these pills. And so I had this fictional character Louise have a psychotic episode and I wanted to get it right so that's why I would say it was possibly the most difficult scene to write in the book.

Amy Clark (47:10)

Yeah. Yes, it's so fascinating that you bring this up because this month we're reading The Mad Wife by Megan Church for our book club. I don't know if you've gotten your hands on it, but as you're dropping,

Gill Paul (47:25)

I haven't yet,

Amy Clark (47:28)

Gill, this is a book for you for sure. And it's like going through just in the 1950s about lobotomies and the ways that they were trying to control women's minds back then. And it has been, just a very fascinating, sad, terrible, experience to read about what, you know, if you were just a housewife who wasn't, doing what you needed to do according to them, you know, if you were struggling with something like depression, or those things went untreated and instead it was like trying to right the ship of your mind to align with what men expected of you and it's just I think you will absolutely love this book if you haven't read it it's very smartly plotted but that's exactly what we are digging into is like the why behind what these breakdowns come from somewhere sometimes and also from our mental health struggles so I thought you did that very beautifully.

Gill Paul (48:20)

Thank you. Yeah, no, it's horrendous the way that mental health was so poorly understood back then. And my dad told me that he once visited his sister when she was in a mental hospital and it was four o'clock in the afternoon but she was still wearing her night dress. And he said, why are you not dressed? And she said, they won't let me because I didn't eat all my dinner last night. She was depressed, that's why she was there and she was getting punished. Just upsets me so much. You just want to go back in time and give her a hug.

Amy Clark (48:55)

That's heartbreaking. Yeah, it's so misunderstood and you know, I mean it persists. I mean we're still trying to fight for our place in medicine and women's health and having doctors acknowledge us and not call us crazy when we have things wrong with us. And so, you know, it yields such a great conversation because I think there's so much that book clubs can talk about about that experience and maybe the women that they witnessed throughout their lives and what has transpired for them.

On the flip side, although this is more like the gossipy end, there's a lot of pills going on that are not because, you know, people are mentally ill, but just because they are using them for uppers and trying to get more done. And, you know, we've got dexies sometimes for my anxiety, my anxiety, my OCD, reading that someone's taking a dexie and then a sleeping pill and then a vitamin fusion and then drinking booze. It was crazy.

The 60s were a little bit wild. What surprised you about the ways that women were managing their busy schedules and achieving success?

Gill Paul (49:59)

Yeah, I mean, President John F Kennedy was getting vitamin. They called it vitamin injections, but it had amphetamines in it and I think Jackie did as well from Dr. Max Jacobson, the doctor to the stars. But the thing about amphetamines, and I do know a bit about this, is that you have a massive come down afterwards. They're hugely addictive, hugely dangerous. I think almost more dangerous than heroin because they're so quickly addictive and the minute you stop taking them you're going to have this massive after drop that just makes you want to take more. So I just don't understand how they continue to function. You know the symptoms when you're coming off amphetamines, it's insomnia, depression, vivid nightmares, really horrible sweating. So you kind of you rush out and you buy more amphetamines. How did anybody function when they were doing this?

Amy Clark (50:54)

Yes, I know. And to be functioning at that level is just really like wild to me. It was very interesting to hear about these different kinds of routines and how they were staying up. And you do bring up JFK. It's funny, I just read a book about JFK told from Jackie Kennedy's perspective. And yeah, they would come in and shoot them up with the IV infusion before appearances. Or if they were a little bit run down and they had to go and do another engagement, they'd just come and give everybody shots. And I think at one point Jackie was like, I don't want that anymore. But you know, how were they to know? They have these physicians that are retained for them that are telling them that these are perfectly safe, a great way to like pump you up. So like at that point, no one knew.

Gill Paul (51:42)

They absolutely didn't. And sleeping pills as well is not something I would want to get into. I think there's more natural ways for dealing with all these problems, finally.

Amy Clark (51:49)

Yeah. For sure. Well, I want to talk about your book's ending. Did you always know your story would end this way?

Gill Paul (52:02)

I could have followed, I could have stopped in the 1960s, but once I decided to make the two Jackies friends, then I wanted to test their friendship. I mean really wanted to write about author friendships through them as well, that was the reason I decided to make them friends because you know author friendships are just the most important thing in this career they really are. Somebody that you can complain about all the sort of you know editors that haven't replied to your email and publicists that can't get you any publicity anywhere and you definitely need them. I'm sure the two Jackies would have

been a little bit competitive with each other you know when they got to know each other although Jackie, Jacqueline Susann, was already a massive seller and Jackie Collins wasn't yet.

But once I'd established that they were friends, then you need to see how strong the friendship is by challenging them to see how it lasted when Jacqueline Susann had a terminal illness. And I thought that's, I just made them, I made Jackie Collins her 4am friend. In fact, I know from her husband's biography of her that she did have 4am friends because the chemo stopped her sleeping. And so she would look for friends in different time zones that she could call at that time of night. She was a massive, massive user of the telephone. She was just poor. My partner complains that I'm on the telephone the whole time, but nothing, nothing like her.

And on the other plot in the book that I had to wrap up was the Nancy plot and I needed her to get together with George in the end, partly because I was mirroring Jacqueline Susann's second novel, The Love Machine, where he was sort of like her Robin Stone character in that. I threw in a few bits of plot that mirrored their novels. But so I was looking for a way they kind of moved into the friend zone, Nancy and George. And how do you get out of the friend zone? And I have to admit here that actually I stole a story from my cousins. So my cousin, I'm not going to name him, but he'd got divorced and he worked in an office with a woman who'd also got divorced, but they were really good friends. They went for a drink after work, but they were very firmly in the friend zone. She, now that they were both single, she wanted it not to be that way. But how do you suddenly break down that barrier? It's really hard. But they happened to be at the same New Year's party. So she just went up to him and threw her arms around him and gave him a very intimate kiss. And him saying to me the next day, ooh I think she must have been drunk. That's the way to somehow, they had to break through somehow, so anyway I stole their story for my ending.

Amy Clark (54:43)

It's perfect. It's so perfect and unexpected and wonderful. You know, I forgot, I skipped one question and we're going to backtrack a little bit, but I want to talk about the talk show circuit. Can we talk about that Truman Capote, he was a little, he was a little mean, but then you share that she was also mean to him. And I want to talk a little bit about these moments where we are going through a lot in Jacqueline's life. Not only, you know, the Truman Capote wars, but there is a scene where you also have Sharon Tate's murder that was happening and she becomes too inebriated over dinner to go and is too tired and just decides to go to bed instead of, potentially what would have been a completely life altering experience. Were those moments like close together or did you kind of move things around to keep plot flowing?

Gill Paul (55:46)

I don't remember when they both were. The Sharon Tate murders, when I first read or heard that Jacqueline had claimed that she was supposed to be there that night, I wondered if I believed her or not, but it's in Irving's biography, or her husband's biography, so I'm assuming it is. And it must have been incredibly scary because she was already worried about threats to her safety from the public because you reach a certain level of fame where it's not so easy for you to just wander into a bookshop and sit there signing books. She'd had death threats because of the content of her books and so the fact that she nearly went to this party where so many people were brutally murdered must have been very very upsetting and disturbing for her. Sharon Tate had appeared in the film of *Valley of the Dolls* and she knew her, she'd been to her wedding to Roman Polanski so she knew her quite well.

The Truman Capote, I mean, you know, obviously he was a bitch. He's like, if you've seen *The Swans* or, or, you know, that great TV series about all the women in the book, or there's a book as well about all the women that he befriended and then they all fell out with him because he wrote really nasty stuff about them. So it wasn't just Jacqueline Susann that he was nasty about. Was all the women, all his closest friendship group basically. He stabbed them in the back at one point or another.

Amy Clark (57:11)

Yes, yeah, I believe Melanie Benjamin wrote a book about that and I remember reading it and so I was familiar with his behaviors but I just find it fun that they were kind of warring where she was gonna call him out on it but she also had said some really nasty things about him so I'm like well you know I guess tit for tat right?

Gill Paul (57:32)

There is one angle that I would have loved to cover in my book, but I wasn't allowed to by the lawyers, and that is Jackie Collins's rivalry with her sister Joan. And I did write it in the first draft. And in fact, my first draft of this novel had the lawyers getting very upset. In the States, there were lots of emails with red flashing lights on them saying, stop, stop, stop.

Anyway, they didn't want me to fictionalise anybody that's still alive to dramatise any scene. So which is a shame because the Joan and Jackie dynamic is another, you know, Joan Collins went on to write a couple of novels herself for Random House, which Random House, the second one, they then rejected and wanted her to pay back the advance. And she went to court over it. And she plays, she basically plays Alexis in the court, see Alexis Carrington from *Dynasty*, she just stands there, stands up for herself.

And she's a great character as well, I absolutely adore Joan Collins. But yeah, I wasn't allowed to write about her at all because A, she's still alive, and B, she knows her way around law courts now, so.

Amy Clark (58:44)

Yeah, they probably don't want to get in any trouble at all, so...

Gill Paul (58:46)

No, I had to take all of that out. Anybody that's still living.

Amy Clark (58:49)

Yeah, and you also did like, I feel like at the end you said too that about Jacqueline's son that you, he was still alive and I did look him up and it did say he's 78, I believe, at the time of this recording and and I don't, did he ever speak again? He never spoke again, did he?

Gill Paul (59:09)

No. He's just lived his life in an institution and he's now cared for by relatives of Irving's, Jacqueline's husband, look after him and make sure he's safe in his place. I didn't actually even name him in the book. So it was a tricky juggling act because I needed to mention that he existed because he was the reason why she was writing these books and so keen to make all this money. But, you know, he can't answer back, it would have been unfair to describe him in any way, I think. It was just, you know, that's where I decided to draw the line.

Amy Clark (59:40)

Yeah. Did you hear from either of the families or anyone close to them about this book? Did you hear anything?

Gill Paul (59:50)

I shared a foreign rights agent with Jackie Collins' daughter and I passed on copies to them and to Joan through her makeup artist who lives quite near me. But no, they didn't decide that they wanted to leap up and endorse it at all.

Amy Clark (1:00:05)

Okay, yeah, I wondered, yeah, if there was any response. It is, you know, small town, and you can still know people, your life is overlapping, especially with working in publishing, so I'm sure there was going to be some type of link.

Gill Paul (1:00:18)

We know people in common, yeah. But I've had a little bit of interest in the film rights. You never kind of get too excited about these things because it takes so many years and it's so unlikely to happen, but it would be great if it did.

Amy Clark (1:00:37)

This is totally made for Ryan Murphy, don't you think?

Gill Paul (1:00:40)

I would love Ryan Murphy. He can have the film rights if he wants them. I don't know what Ryan would even think about that, but I'm personally a fan too.

Amy Clark (1:00:42)

Yeah. I'll put in a word. I'll put in a word. It's funny because sometimes you can see that people write with the intention of the screenplay and sometimes that doesn't work because they get so hung up on what they would like to see on a screen. I didn't feel like that. I felt like this was really transporting me elsewhere, not where I'm just like getting like trivia and like trying to like set a scene up, but this would translate so well to screen. And I would love to see who would you picture playing these women? You have anybody?

Gill Paul (1:01:17)

Gosh, I have no idea. I honestly haven't thought about that at all. I would leave it up to the producers. But yeah, absolutely. It'd be brilliant. No, because in my novels about real women, I'm trying to understand them. I'm trying to dig down and figure out what makes them tick. So in some ways they're quite internal. But my film agent just says, give them lots of plot. That's what they want. You need a lot of plot to fill even a half hour episode of something so yeah keep it keep it moving not too much sitting around and talking to each other that doesn't work for film.

Amy Clark (1:01:52)

Yeah. That's so funny. Well, if people loved Scandalous Women, where would you like us to explore next with your books?

Gill Paul (1:02:06)

I've written about so many women that just interest me. We talked about Jackie Kennedy. I've written about her rivalry with Maria Callas, the novel called Jackie and Maria, when they were rivals over the affections of Greek shipping millionaire Aristotle Onassis. And that one was great fun to do, but I had to stick quite closely to fact because they're both so well known and there's so many biographies about both of them.

And the book I wrote just before Scandalous Women, A Beautiful Rival, there's another rivalry. There's a theme here. There's another rivalry there between Helena Rubinstein and Elizabeth Arden in back in the 1920s when they both had rival New York salons and they were trying to undercut each other's products and steal formulae and steal staff and even steal husbands in one case you know there was a very bitter you know they didn't they called each other that woman and the other one and they wouldn't even mention their names

Amy Clark (1:03:06)

Oh my gosh, this is so fun because that will send us on lots of fun juicy adventures with all these women. Of course, you know, with this book especially I was down a rabbit hole, like trying to like find out more and looking up things and having so much fun. And obviously you could be on a YouTube quest too, and go through some of the same, very same interviews that Gill went through and look up these, you know, little segments with the women and immerse yourself further. Gill, is there anything that you wanted to us that we haven't covered about this book or any trivia or anything you would like me to ask you that I didn't.

Gill Paul (1:03:42)

We've covered just about everything. I just want to say how grateful I am to all the work that you've put into coming up with such great questions and all your technical know-how doing the actual physical putting a podcast together. I'm so impressed. I'm so impressed that we came online and you said, I can see you've got echo cancellation. I didn't know I had echo cancellation. But it's great that you...

Amy Clark (1:03:58)

Thank you. Well, the tools have evolved. They are very good helpers for someone who... But I will also say I taught myself how to podcast on YouTube. So thank you, YouTube, for all that you offer. I watched a lot of teenagers show me how to do sound and how to record. And I'm like, if a teenager can do it, why can I not do it in my 40s? Why not? Why can I not do that?

Gill Paul (1:04:11)

Yeah. Brilliant. I still get my niece to show me how to work my phones. That's how it goes.

Amy Clark (1:04:37)

I get it. I get it. Well, Gill, this has been such a pleasure. Thank you so much for coming on the show and also talking through all the dishy back half of the book with us. And I'm so excited to introduce your work to our readers and friends. will link to Gill Paul's

Instagram and her website. So if you want to connect with her further, this is just the beginning of your adventures with this author.

Gill Paul (1:05:03)

Thank you so much.

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