

The Crime Cafe with Emilya Naymark

Presented By:



Debbi: Hi everyone. My guest today studied art and illustrated books before she started writing them. She is a web developer and a designer, an illustrator and artist, and a writer of psychological thrillers, crime and suspense. I'm pleased to have with me today my guest Emilyya Naymark. Did I say that correctly, Emilyya?

Emilyya: Yes. Perfect.

Debbi: Wonderful. I was going to ask you about that and I forgot, of course. Thanks for being here today. I really appreciate it.

Emilyya: Yeah. Thank you for having me. I'm just thrilled

Debbi: Certainly. Yeah, certainly. I have to commend you on your guest post. I mean, it just evoked the feeling of being there in upstate New York. I've been there and I've almost drowned there myself.

Emilyya: I know. I was amazed. I actually listened to your collection of near-death experiences. I was like, oh my God.

Debbi: It is rather astonishing that I'm alive, I have to tell you. [Behind the Lie](#) is the second book in your Sylvan series, correct?

Emilyya: Yes. Correct. Yeah.

Debbi: And Sylvan is the name of the town where the series takes place, right?

Emilyya: Correct.

Debbi: I thought that was very interesting. Tell us about your protagonist Laney Bird, and what inspired you to write the series.

Emilyya: First, I want to talk a little bit about Sylvan. Sylvan is a made-up name, but it's for a very real place. I basically set both novels in the town where I live. The street where my characters live, when I write it, I imagine the street where I live. I look out the window and I describe the houses that I see and the roads that I see. And when I write about neighboring towns, I actually use their real names. When my characters move around, they use real highways and everything.

Laney is also similarly a bit of a hybrid. She used to be an NYPD undercover detective before the first book begins. So, before the first book begins, that's what she does, and she works a Russian mafia

racketeering case that goes really, really bad. She quits the NYPD. At the same time, her husband, who she loves crazily, leaves her and leaves her in charge of their 10-year-old kid who's not an easy child. And so basically before even the series begins, she's kind of in this place where everything she ever worked for, everything she ever wanted, everyone she ever loved is gone and she has to rebuild her life, which she begins to do, and she has to rebuild herself.

So, by the time the second book begins, *Behind the Lie*, she's beginning to sort of find a foothold in a new life. At this point, she's a private investigator so she's kind of moved on a little bit since the first book and she loves doing that work. She loves being an investigator. She loves the detective, the cerebral part of it, but she's also very, very good at ... she kind of has the gift of gab. She can convince people of anything and she can get people to open up to her, which served her very well when she worked undercover. She still continues to use those skills in her new life.

The second book begins with a gigantic block party that goes very, very bad. There's a shooting. There's a ...

Debbi: It's a mess.

Emilya: It's a mess. There's arson. There are all kinds of stuff that happens and a couple people go missing, including the one friend that she made in this new life where she's kind of learning how to trust human beings and all of a sudden, the one friend she has is gone and she begins to realize that even this one person that she has grown to really, really like and trust had this gigantic secret in her life that basically exploded that night.

Debbi: Wow! It's really something. I mean, that beginning really just kind of hits you with everything that's going on. The fires, the gunfire, it's something else. It really pulls you right in. I'm interested in how you developed her backstory. How much did you flesh out the backstory before you started the series?

Emilya: Good question. I knew that she was going to be working a racketeering case because my husband was an NYPD detective, and he was an undercover and he worked a racketeering case. And I thought, why do I need to invent anything? All I have to do is just ... I have a crime right here and somebody who worked that crime. He can tell me all about it. So that part of it is kind of was ready-made, kind of came along. He didn't work

with the Russian mob. He worked with a different mob, but I'm Russian and being Russian gave me enough of a confidence to write about Russians in the mob, even though I don't know any Russian mobsters, but I figured at least I could write about the culture and that was a lot of fun.

Debbi: Wow! You're Go ahead. I'm sorry.

Emily: No, no. So that was that. And then her family, I guess I'm just very fascinated about writing about women, and women within families and women facing sort of life challenges and professional challenges while still having all these—I don't even know if I'm going to say they're intrinsic feelings or society-imposed feelings—but whatever it is, I think we can all agree that women have different pressures on them in our society than men do and it combines everything. It combines work, it combines life, it combines children, family. Whatever it is you've got, it's different. So, I knew that that was going to be what I would be writing about.

Debbi: That's really interesting. Really, really interesting. I love that, your comment there. And I also think it's great that you have such a wonderful inside source there with your husband being a detective.

Emily: Yeah.

Debbi: Sounds like you yourself have some interesting background in terms of where you've lived and all of that.

Emily: Yeah. Well, in my career, I'm in IT, which means that I basically stare at a screen all day long. So, I had to mine my background for more interesting things to write about than how to code.

Debbi: Well, it's still great what you're doing because knowing code is a really important skill these days.

Emily: Yeah. Thank you.

Debbi: What made you focus on psychological thrillers as opposed to calling yourself say a private eye writer?

Emily: Well, I think it just goes back to the fact that even though I write genre, I'm much more interested in characters than what is ... I think there's maybe a misconception that genre writing is not as focused on characters, but I think especially over the past decade, it has become

much, much more character-centric. And I love not just writing about some crazy crime, I love to figure out why a person wanted to commit the crime. I'm not as interested in writing about a criminal just because they're a criminal. I want to find out how what you would consider to be a normal person leading a regular life with a job and a family becomes a criminal. What happens? That makes it very interesting for me.

Debbi: That's a great question too. You do write beautifully about upstate New York. Apart from almost drowning there, what is it that interests you in particular about the place?

Emily: Well, it is beautiful and I really just react just being around all the green stuff and going hiking. I just love it. But aside from that, there's something incredibly interesting about upstate New York, because it has such a rich history in the country. A big chunk of the Revolutionary War was fought really within like a 12-mile radius of where I live. West Point is a 20-minute drive where Benedict—not Benedict, John Andre—where John Andre was captured is like a little hiking trail, also like a 20-minute drive. Where he was held is still a tavern. He was held in a tavern and it is still the same tavern, and you could still go there and get a sandwich, which is unbelievable to me. America is such a young country, these kinds of things you're more likely to run across in Europe, but this is one of the places where the past really kind of coexists with the present. I love that.

The other thing that's been happening over the past few decades really, and has sped up in the past maybe 10 years is that a lot of the arts community is being priced out of New York City, and they're basically moving up here. So, filmmakers, screenwriters, musicians, artists, writers. I mean, there's more here than I think pretty soon is going to be in Brooklyn. A lot of places that we go to and we meet young, hip people and we're like, you're not from around here. They're like, no, no, we just moved here. Let me guess, you used to live in Park Slope, right? And they were like, yes.

Debbi: Wow.

Emily: It's great. So, it's like all the good stuff.

Debbi: That's very cool. Who are your favorite writers? Which ones inspire your writing the most?

Emilyya: I definitely have some go-to writers who just the moment the book comes out, I buy it. I pre-order it and I just can't wait, and I've read it multiple times. One of them is Tana French, who is absolutely my go-to for this kind of character-driven crime writing. Lisa Jewell, she's another one, and although there aren't going to be any more books coming forth from Anne Rice, she was a gigantic, gigantic inspiration back in the day. Those are the ones that come to mind right now, but I'm always discovering and rediscovering new writers and it kind of depends.

Debbi: Yeah. I know what you mean. It seems like there are a lot of them out there who are just extraordinary.

Emilyya: Yeah.

Debbi: It's hard to keep up.

Emilyya: I just realized that another one who I really, really like, and I'm reading his new book now is Chris Bohjalian. He wrote [The Flight Attendant](#) and his new book is [Hour of the Witch](#), and I'm reading that right now. He's very good.

Debbi: I have to read that one, [The Flight Attendant](#), because I saw it on TV and I'd be interested in reading the book definitely.

Emilyya: It's a quick read.

Debbi: Great. Do you do a lot of research before you start working on a story?

Emilyya: I do. I do. I have to do a lot of research because I have to, even if it doesn't go into the book, I have to understand it. I have to understand everything I'm writing about so that there's a certain confidence, not just in the writing, but when my characters talk about something, I have to write it as if they really know what it is. There was one short story I wrote a few years ago that ended up in an anthology. And in it, I was writing about a man who swims out into the waters off of Cape Cod, and I needed to know how far can a ship be for him to be able to see it? What time of day would he have to be? I started thinking, well, there's tides and how shallow is the water and how cold is the water? I had to know all that. None of that made it into the story, but I still had to know what it would be before I could write it.

Debbi: Absolutely. Yeah. How do you manage your time in order to get your writing done between your work and so forth?

Emilyya: And living?

Debbi: And living.

Emilyya: I write in the evenings, which I find that for me works out pretty well. Usually an hour, a couple of hours, and I try to do it every day when I'm writing. When I have a book that's happening, I try to do it every day. If it doesn't happen every day, I don't kill myself over it, but I try for every day and every once in a while, I go out with my friends instead, and that's okay.

Debbi: You're allowed. Yeah.

Emilyya: Yeah.

Debbi: You're allowed to have a life.

Emilyya: Yeah, exactly.

Debbi: And what are you working on now?

Emilyya: I do have another project that I'm kind of waiting to see if I'm going to be allowed to keep going with it. But I am very excited about it.

Debbi: Is it part of the series?

Emilyya: I would like for it to be part of the series.

Debbi: Yeah, it would be, yeah. Okay. Excellent. Good. What advice would you give to someone who would like to have a writing career?

Emilyya: So, what I think is that you have to be clear in your mind that you're writing because you love writing, because if your goal is anything else, you're not going to be happy. The writing itself has to make you happy. So that's the first one. And the second one is try to write consistently and be persistent. And if you get rejections, keep writing, because in the end you have again, every time you get a rejection, you say, did I enjoy writing it? Do I want to keep writing? And if the answer is yes, then you keep writing because you're going to get better. And pretty soon you're not going to have a rejection. You're going to have an acceptance.

Debbi: Exactly. Yeah. It's persistence and so forth is key here. And as you said, enjoyment of the process cause if you don't enjoy it, what's the point?

Emily: Exactly. What's the point?

Debbi: Very much so. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about before we finish up?

Emily: No. This has just been a lovely conversation. One of the incredible perks of being on this journey other than the writing is that I get to meet interesting people and talk to them.

Debbi: I understand that feeling. Back in the days when I was going to conferences on a regular basis, it was so exciting just to meet other authors, just be friends, just exchange views, that kind of thing. That's what I did.

Emily: Yeah, and I find that writers are pretty interesting people. They tend to be pretty funny, too.

Debbi: Yeah, definitely.

Emily: And I appreciate that.

Debbi: And they tend to be real supportive, too.

Emily: Yeah. Oh my god. Yeah.

Debbi: My gosh. I'm just really glad that we were able to do this. I'm happy that you were willing to wait for an interview because my gosh, the podcast seems to just be kind of expanding in terms of when the next spot is available.

Emily: I know. It's so impressive. When I, when I was looking into it, I'm like, well, I'll have another book coming out next year. Might as well book it ahead of time.

Debbi: All right. I'm glad you think long term. That's the way you have to think in this business. I really think so. I really appreciate your being here today and I enjoyed talking to you very much.

Emily: Well, thank you. Likewise.

Debbi:

Thank you. And I will just finish up by saying to all you listeners, be sure and check out our Patreon page. I'm adding Discord access to me as one of the perks at all levels. Now I'm just getting to know Discord through another thing I'm doing. It's not really writing. It's kind of writing related, I suppose you could say, but be that as it may, I'm kind of getting to know Discord a little bit. So, if you want to get to know Discord with me, join me on Patreon. Become a patron and you can reach me anytime, I guess through Discord. Maybe it's better than Facebook. I hope so; I don't know. Anyway, I'm learning. I can't believe actually that I'm doing a podcast, let alone being on something called Discord. That's what's so funny about all this.

In any case, please do check out the Patreon page and I'll just finish up by saying that we have a very special guest next time. It will be bestselling author Karin Slaughter. So, in the meantime, take care and happy reading.