



# EPISODE 106

## Grayscale: a novel Book Signing

TRANSCRIPT

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*Intro: Hi everyone and welcome to The Enchant Me Podcast. I'm Kim Selby and I'll be your host as we go looking for creative inspiration every day life. In each episode, we'll talk about a quick one or two hour excursion we go on that's meant to feed our creative spirit and refill our reservoir of internal inspiration. Our excursions are based on the concept of the 'artist date', one of the tools in "The Artist's Way", a book by Julia Cameron that's a great book to read if you're looking to bring more creativity into your life no matter what form you find it. So let's get started.*

Hi everyone and welcome to episode 106 of *The Enchant Me Podcast*. I'm Kim Selby and I just want to say thanks for being here and taking a listen. We hope you find some enjoyment or a nugget of inspiration from the excursions we are going on.

This week's excursion was something special and not something that you get to do every day.

I've been a life long lover of books of all kinds. Reading has always been something that is not only enjoyable, but has also served as something that has become a part of who I am. I can remember being as young as four or five, sitting on my grandfather's lap and he taught me words out the dictionary.

"Learn one new word every day," he would tell me. "You'll get smarter every day." His words and his lesson hit its mark, and although as I grew, I'm sure I didn't read the dictionary every day, his wisdom stayed with me, so much so, that when he passed away in 2001, I snuck a pocket dictionary into his casket so he could keep learning too.

I was a kid, a teen, and later an adult that kept a book with me pretty much at all times. What better way to spend the time in the back seat on a boring car ride, or when an oil change takes longer than expected?

In college, I was voted most likely to move to a log cabin to write books, I've never done it. I've dabbled for sure, and I suspect that even creating this podcast is akin to living on the edge of that vision that others had of me, and to be honest that I have had for myself. I even have a pretty good story to tell, one that I've told in pieces and parts, but have never buckled down and committed to doing the work that it takes to get the whole thing done.

So when my friend wrote a published a novel I knew that not only would I go to show support for his accomplishment, it was also a perfect artist date to go on.

And just one quick note before we dive in. I'm happy to announce that we're going to hear from him during this episode. They say that you don't get what you don't ask for and I am honored that when I asked if he would record an excerpt for this episode, he graciously agreed. *Grayscale* is a modern gothic mystery that tells the story of a reclusive graphic novel author and who, when asked to take on a new project about a missing couple, is hurled into a story that is more complex than expected and forces him to face his past. It's a story that is combines mystery and intrigue, ghostly visions and the melancholy of lost love that keeps you guessing right from the start.



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Why I went to the signing is not the question to ask. I went because my friend wrote and published a book, and that is a huge accomplishment and I not only wanted to support him, I was really excited to go to a real book signing where I actually knew the author and felt a connection to the work, having already read and enjoyed it. I've been to four other book signings.

The first one was in high school and Mitch Gaylord the gold-medal award winning Olympic gymnast was appearing at a local mall. I admittedly have no idea what he wrote, and now, many years later, just Googled "Mitch Gaylord author" and "Mitch Gaylord Moorestown Mall book signing 1980s" nothing relevant is coming up, so I am thinking there was no book. Perhaps headshots instead of written pages were being signed. What I do remember is him sitting at a table in the center of the mall, clad in a robin's blue track suit with his dark, shiny and luxurious hair, flanked by so many security officers that you could barely see him and the line of teen-aged girls stretched all the way outside the door and down the mall sidewalk.

The second one I remember going to was much later, and much more reserved. Having worked in New York City during the events of September 11, the local law enforcement officers became heroes to many during that time. One of those heroes - to me at least - was Bernard Kerik, the NYC Police Commissioner that led the NYPD during the aftermath of the towers being attacked. His autobiography "The Lost Son: A Life in Pursuit of Justice" was published in 2001, just a few weeks after that fateful day. If you browse through the Table of Contents of the book, his last chapter talks about events that happened in August of 2001. The timing of the completion of his story is eerie, considering what would happen just weeks later that would propel him farther into the spotlight than I bet he could ever imagine.

At his book signing, in December 2001, at a quaint bookstore in Ridgewood, NJ, I remember clutching my book as I waited in the quiet line for my turn. There was no feeling of excitement or jubilation in the air as you might expect at an event like this. Instead, the air was thick with sadness and solemnity. I remember rehearsing what I was going to say to him, reminding myself to keep it quick and to the point. I wanted to thank him for his service and for providing the city a much needed sense that we would recover from this horrific time. When my time came, I approached him, held out my book, opened my mouth to begin speaking, and immediately burst into tears. I barely croaked out a "Thank you" and an answer to his question: "What is your name?" as he signed my book and slowly nodded his head.

Unfortunately, his hero's badge has become more than a bit tarnished in recent years with him being convicted of a selection of crimes that sent him to prison, but during that time, he represented a beacon of hope and healing to many.

The third book signing in 2011 was one I took my two nieces to when they were little to meet Jeff Kinney, the author of The Wimpy Kid books. He appeared at a local Barnes and Noble to much fanfare to promote his latest book at the time Diary of a Wimpy Kid Cabin Fever, which told the tale of its hero Greg and his attempt to earn some money at Christmastime. The line snaked through the store, weaving through the rows of books. They moved things along quickly, and there was no time for personalizations or questions and one of the young actors from the movie series either was there, or was about to arrive. I remember thinking that Kinney looked at best mildly disinterested in being there, and at worst flat-out annoyed. I also remember thinking that as a successful kid's book author, he might try and look a tad more engaged with the kids and the parents that were buying his books. The B&N had gone all out for him with large-scale cardboard cutouts of his charac-



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ters, and even creating a winter wonderland with fake snow in the parking lot. His perceived annoyance left me with a bad taste in my mouth for him, his books and quite frankly, his success that he seemed to take for granted in some way.

The fourth was to meet Andy Cohen, the mercurial host of a variety of shows on the Bravo channel where he did a lively Q&A in front of a jam-packed local auditorium before signing hundreds of books for over three hours. He was jovial and personable, and chatted with many people as they had their books signed and took selfies with him - yes I have one. In a later book, he spoke about that particular signing being his last for that particular book, and as having eaten half of a pot lollipop and drinking tequila before he went on stage. I guess that explains how he kept his jovial nature throughout the entire event.

The signing for *Grayscale* was held in a charming coffee shop in the charming town of Collingswood, NJ, on a bright Saturday afternoon. I went with my sister and my seventeen year old niece, who seemed oddly intrigued by the fact that I actually knew a published author. She was in the throes of trying to decide what colleges to visit and apply to, and had the dreaded college essay looming over her, so I was hoping that she might take some kind of inspiration in meeting someone who wrote. Perhaps she would see that although the idea of writing seemed daunting to her, it could be done and celebrated.

As we neared the entrance, an eager young girl, asked us if we wanted to come inside and "meet an author" as she handed us bookmarks. A nice touch, indeed. We accepted the bookmark and told her that why we were here and entered. The shop was welcoming inside with a small outdoor space and an "anti-Starbucks" vibe which is also a plus in my book. It displayed art from local artists on its walls and clearly served as a community meeting space in a town that has come into its own in the past decade and has gaining a reputation as a dining and shopping destination.

There were people milling about and the three of us ordered drinks and found a table. It was good sized group, that grew as we drank our drinks. My friend was stationed at a table surrounded by his books, his family and people who were there to wish him well, buy his book, and of course have him sign it.

I could tell my niece was intrigued by the way she kept one eye on our conversation, and one eye on what was going on at the table. After a while, we decided to get our books and get in line. I wanted her to meet him and get a book signed as a way to maybe help her be less anxious and more excited about having to write her college essays after having the opportunity to meet a published author. We stayed at the signing for about an hour, and then thought it best to let our table go so others could enjoy the festive and celebratory atmosphere.

As I mentioned at the top of the episode, and I won't make you wait until the end, here is an excerpt from *Grayscale: a novel*.



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*Excerpt of Grayscale: a novel*

*by T. Reilly*

He turned the corner onto a narrow, unlit street. It was a shortcut home, and his favorite place to walk at night because of its emptiness like a forgotten path, and the way it was lined with the backs of buildings so nothing could disturb the moment as he dissected the darkness.

Not true darkness of course. Not like those places far away from manufactured illumination like along a country road or in the middle of the woods, or in a bedroom at night with the lights off and drapes closed and head submerged in a sea of blankets. It was city dark. The kind that happens on the back streets well past midnight where stores are closed, seldom a car passing by, and broken street lights or none at all. The manufactured illumination still bleeds in because in the city, light is inescapable. But it is dark enough to allow the grayscale to find the extreme edges of its range in corners of walkways, in alleys and behind trashcans.

Quinton often defined his surroundings in terms of the grayscale, the artist's tool for making subtle variation or deep contrast between objects in a frame. Night was his favorite canvas. Outside along the cityscape, especially the back streets to track down the illusive city dark, and in bars and clubs where darkness was celebrated.

His eyes darted around the canvas looking for dark corners as he strolled along the wet sidewalk. Those journeys down the street, the shortcut home, were exercises in how the cityscape interacted with itself – the shading, the curves and sharp edges, the objects blending into each other to emphasize the claustrophobic nature of a crowded and cluttered city.



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On that street, he could hear the smaller sounds of Philly that were only audible when it was late and the bigger sounds shut off. The rustling of the trash in the wind. Water flowing into the gutter. The back door of a refrigerator truck opening to unload the day's delivery to the market more than a block away. His own boots against the pavement. The sounds accompanied the imagery, as did the rank smell of urine and trash. But that was all they were to be, an accompaniment. The listening was passive, the visual observation a more conscious effort. Quinton always seemed to be drawing what he saw, even if only in his head, fixated on the surrounding visual stimulation.

The subtle movement of the street gradually muffled under the sounds his mind orchestrated as the volume was turned up slightly, the change barely noticeable until it filled the space. Quinton was caught up in searching through the shadows, the outlines of the architecture and other objects that compromised the street, and the perceived apparitions that the eyes conceived from interpreting the black spaces, that he didn't realize the sounds of the city were being replaced by yet another apparition. That song. That undeniable sequence of notes. The one that evoked the most lucid of memories. The smells of places left behind. The vivid mental image capturing excitement and movement, and faces. The sensations of heat and breeze, and touch. Memories so real they could be felt at the fingertips, and deep in the pit of the stomach. It emerged in the brain and gradually escaped the frontal cortex as a hum. First a musical sound under the breath and growing in volume until it became noticeable, part of the consciousness, in the now, aware of the recollection as the notes left closed lips. Quinton was humming that song, the one he hadn't listened to intentionally in years; the one that was to be avoided no matter if it came through on the radio or played in a crowded bar. That song, never to be forgotten but never to be heard, was there – why?

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Why? Why? Why was the song there? There is only one way to find out and that is to read the book. It's available on Amazon - the link is in the show notes and on [theenchantmepodcast.com](http://theenchantmepodcast.com). And, if you are local to the Philadelphia/Southern New Jersey area, or are in the mood for a good road trip, come out to the Collingswood Book Festival on October 6 in Collingswood, NJ where T. Reilly will be appearing and you can pick up a copy there.

When I started this podcast, I was worried that all of my takeaways would be the same and that this adventure would become stale and repetitive. So, far it seems that I keep learning new things and gleaning new insights and this one was not different. My grandfather would be proud.

1. Keep at it. In 105 I talked a bit little about the idea of creative resistance and how it can and will stymie even the most diligent. That might be the hardest lesson to work on of all. To create something you actually have to do something. No amount of wishing can make it real. You have to put in the work. Find the time. And there will inevitably sacrifices that will have to be made. It's easy to wish to be a published author. Or painter, or whatever. You actually have to do the work to make your idea a reality.

2. It's never too late. Having had the opportunity to talk to T. about the book before it was published, he mentioned to me that this story has been with him for a long time before he finished and published. Maya Angelou once said - at least Google tells me she said it - that "there is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you," and I think that is very true. *Grayscale* is an example of a story that was living and breathing for a long time before it became tangible ink and paper. People go years and years with ideas rolling their heads without making them real for thousands of reasons. Sometimes for personal reasons, some times for logistical reasons. Just because time passes - and it will regardless if the story gets told or not - doesn't mean it's not a worthy story to tell. In fact, the longer it stays with you only means that it might be more important to finish. This takeaway is certainly true for myself. As someone with a story to tell that has lived inside me for years that can't seem to find its way out. It's something that I think about every day, and probably beat myself up about not making progress, so maybe I should take my own advice. What I can say is that knowing that it took years to bring *Grayscale* to light - no pun intended - is certainly inspirational and is proof that time need not feed one's list of ways of resisting.

3. Find your tribe. Aristotle famously said that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts". And that can be true in a variety of circumstances. Even a semi-loner like myself can see the truth in that statement. Finding and working with like-minded people while you are trying to accomplish anything really, can bring benefits to a process that you might never have been able to realize in other ways.

Now, I'm not necessarily referring to the publication of *Grayscale*. It's not for me to decide or comment on someone else's creative process or how they decided to get the job done. I'm referring in general to the ways that the process of not only starting, but finishing and releasing a product of one's creativity can be nurtured and helped along by finding like-minded people that will help support you along the way. And by support, I don't really mean someone who will blow smoke up your butt or tell you everything is great all of the time. I mean people who you can not only trust, but you can trust to give you honest and constructive comments, not glad-hand or serve as a yes-person and perhaps most importantly, help to hold you accountable for goals you claim to be committed to. A lot of times that is easier said than done, but even having one or two people to make up your tribe can certainly help to get something accomplished.

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Well, that's wraps up this episode. Don't forget, you can find *Grayscale* on Amazon.com and you can come out and meet T. Reilly at the Collingswood Book Festival on October 6, 2018 in Collingswood, NJ. I've posted links on [theenchantmepodcast.com](http://theenchantmepodcast.com) for. Thanks so much for listening, and I hope you enjoyed the episode and I especially hope you enjoyed the excerpt. If you are enjoying the enchant me podcast, tell a friend or stop by iTunes to leave a review.