

Transcript

00:00 You're listening to the My Simplified Life Podcast, and this is episode number 201.

00:08 Welcome to the My Simplified Life podcast, a place where you will learn that your past and even your present don't define your future. Regardless of what stage of life you're in, I want you to feel inspired and encouraged to pursue your dreams, simplify your life, and start taking action today. I'm your host, Michelle Glogevac, and I'm excited to share my stories and life lessons with you while taking you on my own journey. This is my Simplified Life.

00:41 Hi friends, welcome back to another episode. I'm your host, Michelle Glogevac. Today is exciting because it is pub day for my friend and client, Mary Carol Moore. Her novel, *A Woman's Guide to Search and Rescue* is out today and it is so good. It is considered a literary thriller. And now if you don't know what that means, that's okay because I didn't either. And in fact, she didn't know what that meant until someone told her that that was what her novel is.

01:09 It is a book about women as heroes, sisters who come together who have never met before, a chase, there's a gun involved, there's all kinds of action going on, but there's also the elements of togetherness, of family, of what it means to cook together and warm meals. And it is just so, so good. I can't even explain it, but

01:37 I had the pleasure of getting to talk to Mary about what went into this book, what was the reason behind her wanting to write it, and why did it take 10 years to write? But not only that, Mary and I discuss what her journey has looked like because, oh my goodness, it is so good. And I wanna mention, because she didn't mention this in the interview, that she's won the Julia Child Award for one of the cookbooks she's written, which is a big deal. So...

02:04 Listen in as Mary shares her incredible journey of life and how she got to where she is and how the novel *A Woman's Guide to Search and Rescue* came to life. Hi, Mary. Hi, Michelle. I am so excited to get to talk to you about your book and your experience and you just

02:27 You've accomplished so much and I'm so excited because you're just, you're very worldly in so many ways. So before we dive in, can you please introduce yourself to everyone? Yes, I'd love to. I'm so glad to be here with you. My name's Mary Carol Moore and I'm calling in today from New Hampshire where I live with my family, about 90 minutes from Boston and I'm a new author of a new book, which is very exciting. And what is the book?

02:57 The book is called *A Woman's Guide to Search and Rescue*, and it's a novel about two estranged sisters who are forced to reunite under very tricky circumstances when one of them has to flee for her life. And they're both pilots, and I'm fascinated with the whole idea of women as heroes and women pilots, so this book is all about their adventures and really their relationship and how they find out how to...

03:26 basically heal themselves and save themselves while saving each other. I love it. And so when this airs, it will be your pub day. So happy pub day to you. I can't believe it. It's been 10 years doing this book. So I'm just. A long time. Yeah, this one took a long time. I, I've written another novel, which didn't take as long. And I've written other books that really weren't, were blips on the screen compared to this one. This is a, this was like a marriage.

03:55 It's not a date, it's a marriage, this relationship with the book. 10 years is a long time. That's common law property stuff. I know. Well, there you go. It's my property and I'm its property now. I read the book. I absolutely loved it. I told you throughout the time I was reading it that I was enjoying it so much. It's considered a literary thriller.

04:23 Can you share what does that mean for those who aren't in the literary world? You know, I think that as a reader myself, like I wouldn't know what that means just in general. So what does a literary thriller mean and how is that different from other novels that we might read? I didn't really know the term myself. One of the trade reviews wasn't Kirkus. It might have been Publishers Weekly. Somebody called it a cross genre book that was part thriller and part family saga.

04:53 And I had intended this book to be a straight thriller, but truthfully, my agent got involved and she said, you know, you're not really a thriller writer. You know, I don't like people dying and I don't like people getting shot and all that stuff. So she said, well, why don't you just move it towards the more domestic suspense kind of book? And so, oh, that's possibly why it took 10 years. I had to go in and rewrite the thriller part so that it kept the

05:22 idea of somebody running for their life. There is a bad guy, a very handsome bad boy who loves fires and chases the one of the sisters. And, you know, it has that thriller aspect of a chase and a search and rescue happens and all those things. But the real core of the book to me is the literary part, which is the relationship between the two sisters and how they

05:49 are reunited, how they're very estranged from each other. They come from different sides of a very fractured family and they don't really wanna know each other in a sense, but their situation drives them together and they end up becoming a family, which is the cool thing for me, the idea of found family, the idea that people have a family, it might not be their family of origin that their hearts really connect to.

06:16 So these two sisters, despite their legacy, can come together as actual family. I mean, it takes a whole book to get there, but they do. And that literary thriller genre, evidently, that I'm learning is the combination of this kind of more lyrical writing and the focus on character, plus the aspects of a tense plot. Is this something that's learned?

06:42 to write this way. This is the part that fascinates me because I see all of these classes and courses, take this to work on your plot this way and your characters and the point of view. And I'm like, oh, you don't just write it? Yeah, well, I had to study. I studied with this wonderful editor in California who teaches for UCLA. And I studied with him to learn the thriller aspect because he's a real super thriller writer, Robert Evers. And I felt like

07:12 That was something I really didn't know how to do, right? A very suspenseful plot. Cause my interest in life is more the people than the plot. So I really had to go in and kind of study up on that. But once I discovered the thriller thing, I kind of went too far into it. And I had like four people dying and all these fires that killed everybody. And I was like, I don't really like this. So luckily my agent's really a key person in my life. So she came in and said,

07:42 Okay. Where are your real passions in this book and where are your strengths? And so I got to spend another two years writing it back to where my core was, but keeping a lot of what I learned. But I don't think anybody goes into a book intending to, well, at least literary thrillers. I don't know how you'd intend to write a literary thriller, but there are people out there who do it. So, God bless them.

08:10 I love learning about the thriller part because I don't consider myself like a thriller reader. This year I've read a number of novels that are considered thrillers, suspense, and yet it's not like what you'd see on TV where everybody's shooting each other and there's gore and all of this. I'm learning that I'm enjoying some of these things where I feel myself, I'm not going to give the book away. We don't give any spoilers away.

08:40 she's in the cabin and he's coming. And I could feel myself like curling back, like, oh, you have to do this and go get a gun and you know. I could feel myself in her position. So it was fantastic and I loved it. I love that I'm feeling this odd way of, like I gotta get the bad guy. But the other funny part that you mentioned was that he's supposed to be like this good looking, handsome, I didn't feel that in reading it.

09:11 Well, back in her history, he was this cool charmer, you know, who just happened to like to set fires, you know. And so she gets involved with this really bad boy, but he's like so seductive and very interesting to her. And she's got this edge to her. So she's attracted. But his fires and himself get out of control. And so by the time they reunite in the at the end of the book, the scene you're talking about, he's really wasted.

09:39 and she can see him for what he is. And that's good. That's a sign that she's actually grown and she's come to the point where she, you know, his kind of danger isn't for her. Right. So let's talk about how you got to this point to write this book. What was your life journey like? Because I know it and I love it. I find it fascinating. Cher, what is it you intended to do in life and the pivots along the way?

10:09 a mother who was very, very unusual. She was a pilot. She got her commercial flying license at age 22. And that was during the war in 1942, I think it was. And she decided she wanted to join the Women's Air Force Service Pilots, which was an organization, a non-military organization that freed up men for service overseas. So these women, there are only a thousand, about a thousand of them.

10:36 I think 1,800 actually got in and about 800 dropped out. They call it washed out just because it was so rigorous. My mom applied twice and she finally got in. And there were 20,000

applicants. So she was one of the very few that got accepted. And she flew everything from small little Spitfire kind of planes to four engine B-29s, which is just like I.

11:05 And there's a PBS documentary on the WASP, Women's Air Force Service Pilots, and it talks about how the men wouldn't fly the B-29s. They were too big and they were scary and all that stuff. And so they actually recruited the women pilots to teach the men how to fly the B-29s, which I thought was amazing. So my mom did two years of service in this amazing experience that she lived through.

11:33 And then she was married and she had four kids right after the other, when I read after the other and went to work full time and really never went back to flying or talking about flying. So as I was growing up, I knew she had scrap books. She kept them in the bottom drawer of this big chest that we had in the hall. And I would pull them out and I'd look at all her flying pictures and her, like she flew those planes that have two.

12:01 They're behind each other. The navigator is behind the other pilot, and they have open cockpits, so you have to wear these kind of leather helmets with the big goggles, like Snoopy kind of thing. So I saw my mom in these pictures with these little outfits on, and I thought, Mom, what is this? And I was so fascinated with her and her experience as a pilot, and I thought, can women really do this? And so...

12:28 I came from this legacy of women being able to do pretty much whatever they wanted. You could do stuff that only men did. So I really wanted to know how this works. How does a woman become this heroic in her own life? And when I tried to talk to my mom about it, she really didn't want to go back there. She was still proud of it, but it was past history. Now she had kids.

12:57 kids and she had a full-time job and she didn't really have that interest in flying anymore. But to me it was like this incredible secret that I grew up with. So I wanted to write a book about it, about women pilots, and what would happen, you know, I found a flight instructor who was a student in one of my classes and she taught me how to write a scene where a person took a small

13:26 and walked away. And she took it to her cohort of two other pilot training instructors and said, well, this teacher of mine wants to write a scene about this woman who survives a crash. How would it happen? And they brainstormed all these ways. So I kind of learned how to create a pilot, a character who was a pilot. And that was kind of a way to honor my mom and bring back the.

13:54 amazing feeling I had about being the daughter of somebody who had a life like this. I love that. And it's very realistic. The plane crash, the flying, the acrobatics, that it's very thriller. Oh my gosh, I can see this happening. You feel like you're there. So it's definitely accurate from what I would imagine. Well, I'm really pleased because it went through so many

14:21 experts. I didn't trust myself at all. So I had everybody who knew anything about planes look at it. But now I'm searching rescue. This wasn't like this has been 10 years, but your life

has been longer than 10 years. You're not 10 years old. So what happened before this that led up to writing this novel? Well, I was an artist, I was painter. You still are.

14:49 Yeah, I still am. I still a landscape painter. I'm an impressionist painter, so that means I paint in a kind of a style like Monet a little bit, although he's so good, you know, I couldn't attempt to be that good. But I work with atmosphere in color, and so how atmosphere is created by color and light. So I went to France when I was in my last year of college, and I decided I wanted

15:18 study painting. And so while I was there, I've always been passionate about food. So I got into food and I studied at the Cordon Bleu and I studied with private, you know, families who teach me French cooking and their style. When I came back, I decided, well, I got asked actually to do a column for a local magazine on French cooking and I taught it in my little apartment. I lived in Arizona at the time.

15:47 And then I went to open a cooking school in California. And then I got a syndicated column with the LA Times. So all of this kind of snowballed, this love of food, I was painting on the side, but that didn't become my livelihood at all. And I ended up becoming a writer. And it was a little bit like, I didn't intend this, but I just loved food. And whatever you love, you know, you put into whatever creative expression you have. So for me, it was, I painted food, yes, but.

16:16 I mostly wrote about it and ate it. And so, you know, many cookbooks later, I worked for General Mills and Betty Crocker and Food and Wine and all these different places and had this wonderful career in the food world and became kind of successful, I'd say, successful in the cook. Just kind of. Just a little bit. I always smelled like garlic. That was the only downside.

16:46 So then I got diagnosed with cancer. And in 2000, I got diagnosed with breast cancer. And there was a moment where I had to really, it was serious and I had to really look at my life and say, if I died from this, would I be okay with what I've accomplished as a writer? And I thought, no, I've always wanted to write fiction. I've always wanted to write the story about my mom, the pilot story. And

17:16 So I quit my job. I quit my food writing. And I went back to grad school and I got my MFA in fiction. And I started writing novels. And boy, it was such a life change. But sometimes, I don't know, people who have survived cancer tell me that this is common, that you often look at your life because you get close to death. And you look at your life really seriously. And you ask yourself, what am I missing? What haven't I done? And so this was.

17:44 Not everybody would look at their life at that moment and think, I want to write fiction. But for me, it was a huge thing. And so that's what drove it drove me. That's what occupied those years and drove me towards this book. I love it. And besides saying, I want to go write fiction, you went to grad school. You could have at that point been like, I'm not doing school. Let me I'll just, I'll just do something else or just, you know, enjoy life by relaxing or

18:15 I love that this was that dream fulfilled and that you went after it and you've accomplished it and there's more to write. I know this because we've talked about what comes next. And I

have all kinds of ideas for the characters. I know, you gave me such a great idea for the next book. So thank you, I'll dedicate it to you. Thank you, I'm good with the acknowledgement section. I love it.

18:45 And so now that this is all coming to fruition, I mean, this is like, this is a really big deal. How are you feeling now? Like, do you feel like, okay, it's done? Like, it can put it to rest. Obviously you're writing another book. You know, what is that feeling for you? Well, that's a really good question. I don't think I understood that I was really a fiction writer until I started to get the trade reviews in from Kirkus and Publishers Weekly and all those people. You know,

19:15 My first book was published by a small press, my first novel. It's called Qualities of Light, and it did pretty well. I got on NPR, and there was a little bit of nice publicity around it. But it was really a niche book. And I never really got trade reviews. I never did anything like that. So I didn't get that external validation that I was actually a writer who could write a novel that people who never knew me and had very

19:44 broad experience in analyzing whether a book is good or not would say it was a good book. And so about a month or so ago when the reviews started coming in and Kirkus actually selected me for their August magazine, which is a huge honor. I got a half page in that for just because they liked my book. So it transformed something inside me. Suddenly I was not a food journalist who was trying to write a novel. I was actually a novelist.

20:14 For the first time in my history as a writer, I feel like I can stand up kind of proud about my book. I love my book. I love the characters. People are really, you know, people have read the review copies before today, before the publication date, are saying they just can't put it down. They love it. And I feel so different about myself now. And so I can say, okay.

20:42 I was a good food journalist, but now I'm a novelist. And it's kind of like standing up for yourself for the first time saying, Hey, mom, look what I did. Oh, I love it. And I was one who couldn't put it down. I, I read it on a plane to St. Louis. I read it in Chicago. I finished it on a vacation because I couldn't put it down either. I wanted to know what was happening next. I, I thoroughly enjoyed it and I don't blow smoke up anybody.

21:09 I know you have so much experience with this. I'm really gratified to hear it. Thank you so much. No, I just, I read and it's funny. It's like wine. Like if I like it, then I like it. If it's a good book that I don't want to put down, then I blow through it. And I know myself, I'm reading two books right now and one was taking me a while to get through. The other is a client book who luckily...

21:34 I'm like, oh, this is so good. I'm just going through it. You know, again, luckily I'm representing the client book. But you know, you just know. We're picky, aren't we? I mean, as readers, I find myself really, so there's a wonderful writer named George Sanders, who is another writer that writes on Substack, and I'm a Substack author as well. I have a newsletter there every Friday. So he has this thing about.

22:03 your engagement with the story and the writer's responsibility is to make sure that there's no chance for the reader to go, huh, and then drop out. And so one of the things I had to work

on was any, huh, place. You know, and I, when you workshop a book, a manuscript with your agent or with other writers, they're looking for those dropout places. And I wanted no dropouts. I wanted, you know, of course the reader has to take a breath and...

22:32 go find something to eat or, you know, and rest for a while. But I really want wanted people to have a page turner. So that was my, that's the thriller part is the page turner part. Well, you accomplished it. Oh, you're so kind. Thank you so much. No, you did. I love it. I really enjoyed it. And I told you, I want to know what happens next. I'm like, oh, you can keep going. You know, some books end and you're like, okay, well that was it. And it was tied up in a bow and you know, it was put to bed.

23:00 But with yours, I felt like, oh, we can go even more places with these characters. Like, there's a future. I know. You got me set up for another book and actually, I have it all drafted and everything not drafted but written but outlined. Yeah, I know. I didn't intend that, Michelle, where it ended like with a little bit of hope that there's more story. Oh, I love it. Now I'm excited. Yay. You're so kind.

23:29 What does your writing ritual look like? I know it took 10 years and revisions, but did you have a set time? When I was writing my book, I was like, okay, I need to have a thousand words and I would write down beginning and how many words a day and I wouldn't let myself do something. I am a very reward oriented person, so my reward would be like, I get to email my friend Karen if I hit a thousand words. I get to go eat a candy bar.

23:58 What was your ritual like? I had that too. I had a word count. I found myself doing better with word count goal than an hour goal. Some people go by time goals and some people go with word count goals. So like you I went with the word count goal and I did a 2,000 word a day kind of thing when I was drafting and that's hard. That was hard, but I know how to make a really bad draft. So I know how to write.

24:27 really badly and get my 2,000 words. And I know that I love to edit so I can come back in and edit and revise. But as long as I had that basic first draft on page, then I knew I had something to work with. And try not to, I tried not to revise as I went, you know? So my first draft is usually just awful, really awful. And then I go in and I storyboard.

24:53 So I've taught storyboarding for years and years. I have YouTube videos on it and everything. But it's the idea that filmmakers use where they take a cartoon board with blank boxes, and they describe the scene and then move them around. You can do it with index cards. You can move it around so that you get a flow that works. You can do it for characters, like a character flow. You can do it a plot flow and a setting flow. So I would do three different flows.

25:23 And a lot of times I would use a big poster board. Sometimes I did it in Scrivener, which is a writing program that I like. But I would storyboard it after I had the draft, the bad draft, and see where the holes are. And boy, there were so many. And then I knew what to do. I could go back and then write to those problems and fill the holes. And then I would have a reasonable draft and I would.

25:49 you know, go in and do it again and find the holes. Sometimes I would develop characters kind of in a scattered way. I remember one of my editors saying, well, Chad drops out in Chapter five. What happened to Chad? You know, so you can actually track whether the characters continue or whether they disappear, which is horrible for a reader. So all of those things go into my second stage. My first stage is just getting the words on the paper. And the second stage is actually getting the flow done.

26:18 And the flow work doesn't actually require the same kind of daily discipline that the writing work does, because I have to sit and think about it. So I get myself this big wall board, and I put that storyboard up on it. And you can see examples on my YouTube video channels. But then you look at it for a while, and you come in, and you rearrange a couple of things, and you move a scene. And they say, no, the scene is just like that scene, so you take one out.

26:49 And then you say, well, the characters are not growing here. So why do I have the scene? And then you take that out. So you go all through it and you create the flow. And then I would write, do my revision from that change, from the changes on the storyboard. And then I probably would have a pretty good draft at that point. And then I would start to get feedback. And that I use my writers group. I have a writers group of four women.

27:18 published women and one writing partner and I would send it to them and they would say you know where the problems were and then I would go back and write more but this is this is kind of a roundabout answer to your question because the daily writing that we were talking about the word count only happens for me in the early draft stage and then once the draft is together then I have to kind of check the flow do the storyboard and then I get back to the

27:47 and then I do the feedback. And so it's kind of a, I don't know, one step forward, two steps back for a while. I love it. This is the first time I've heard such a thing. So I, because I always kind of figured in my head, I think if you're gonna write a novel, then, you know, I have to make my characters and like, what is all of the background information on each one and, you know, making sure that you don't forget.

28:12 what this person is or who they're related to. There's so many details that you could mix up along the way. So this makes sense to me. In my head, I'm like, oh yeah, I'm going to go check out your YouTube videos. And that's how I figure a novel would be. I forget who I was talking to. There was someone who said, start writing scenes. And so I do have a Google doc in which I've started like, oh, let me, if we do part fiction, part real life.

28:40 type of thing where it's interwoven. So nobody really knows unless they know you intimately of what's real and what's not. But writing down those scenes of, maybe this is something I wanna include going forward type of thing. So I find it fascinating. Well, I do the, what you're talking about about character development, I do that too. But it depends on how I orient the book. Like everybody starts from a different place. I start off and from what's happening.

29:08 Because I think from my journalistic background, I'm a little plot driven, you know, the who, what, when, where, why part of a journalist's background. And then I have a basic plot, what happens. And then I come in and I look at the characters and I think, OK, what do I want them to do? What's their trajectory? What growth are they going to happen? What is going to start them off in a bad place?

29:35 and end them off, end them at the end of the book in a more developed place, more conscious. And then I can go in and do all the character studying and what they look like, what they eat, all that stuff. I love doing that. But that kind of stuff comes usually second for me. And other writers, they start with the person and they'll develop the whole draft based on the character. So it's really... And others do setting.

30:04 You know, like I was thinking Andre Dubu, who wrote House of Sand and Fog, that's a wonderful book. I talked to him at a conference once and I asked, what did he start with in one scene? Did he start with the setting, which was a revolving restaurant, or did he start with what happens there? And he said he started with the setting. He started with the revolving restaurant and that created the scene because it put everybody on a...

30:30 balanced place and it created this incredible scene in the middle of that book. So I think there's some writers that start that way and other writers do, you know, the character and other writers do the plot. So it all has to come together at the end, but it depends on, you know, what your preference is. There's no right or wrong way. No, no. And that's the cool thing. If you know what you're most attracted to as a writer, then you can go with your natural tendency, which is your strength usually. And just know that that tendency.

31:00 And this is what I used to teach when I was teaching writing is your tendency can be your strength, but it can also be your weakness. So if you're really into setting, like I often am, then I can overdo it and then nothing happens except beautiful setting. So you have to recognize that your tendency can be a weakness as well. Well, your settings were beautiful because I pictured all of it, the log cabin and then the grungier cabin and the hanger.

31:28 I was there. I sat at the table and ate with the family. Thank you. You're great. Wow. No, you're great. Happy launch day. Yes. Happy launch day. Where can everybody find you and buy the book? Well, my website is marycarrollmoore.com and it's two R's, two L's, two O's. That's how I tell people marycarrollmoore.com. And on there is the landing page for my book so everybody can see it.

31:58 And then all the booksellers carry it like Amazon, bookshop.org, barnesandnoble.com. So you can go online and look for a woman's guide to search and rescue. And I would love to have you read the book. If you're like Michelle and you love it, that's so great. And you can email me from my website and let me know if you want. Thank you so much, Mary. And congratulations. Thank you. It was a delight to be here today.

32:26 Okay, so you better be on Amazon or your favorite bookstore right now and buying A Woman's Guide to Search and Rescue because it was so good. I read it as quickly as possible

because I wanted to know what was going to happen next to all of these incredible characters. I love hearing Mary's story and how she went from painting to cooking to cookbooks to then realizing that what she really needed to do.

32:54 before her life on earth is over was to write this novel. And it really, it hit me when she said that because it's something that I've reflected on a lot, even before last year when I had my health scare of what is it that I need to do while I have this time to do it. So consider that this week as you go forward because it's something very important that you don't want to leave with any regret. You want to be able.

33:21 to say that I spent the time on this earth doing exactly what I wanted to do and what I was meant to do. And make sure you set in some time to read those amazing books such as this one because I swear to you it will change your life. It'll make you think and maybe even pause to reflect on your own life. A very big happy pub day to Mary.

33:46 And may all of the women in your life who are badass heroes be recognized for who they are and give yourself a pat on the back because you're one of them.