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**Summer Series: Declan**

[Start of recorded material at 00:00:00]

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Kirsty: Hello and welcome to Recently Returned. I’m your host, Kirsty, and I’m joined today by Declan, one of our education and youth librarians for another episode of our Summer Series. Hi Declan, how are you?

Declan: Hi Kirsty, pretty good. You know, school holidays have just started so everything is a bit hectic here at the libraries but looking forward to the Summer Reads at the moment.

Kirsty: Excellent. Well, we’re going to get started with some rapid-fire icebreaker questions.

Declan: Awesome.

Kirsty: Just to get to know you a bit.

Declan: Yeah.

Kirsty: So, our first question is: what is your worst reading habit?

Declan: Hmm. I mean, I‘ve got a few but if I had to pick one, I’d probably say my bingeing. That goes both ways, I either read three books in a month or I don’t read at all for three months. That’s probably the worst habit I would say.

Kirsty: Can be a bit of an issue if you’re trying to keep track of your reading.

Declan: Definitely.

Kirsty: And this one is a little nicer, I guess. Which book do you wish you could experience again for the first time?

Declan: I would probably say Rendezvous with Rama by Arthur C. Clarke. Sort of a giant rock comes hurtling into our solar system and earth scientists go and try to explore it and it's very Arthur C. Clarke sci-fi exploratory sort of thing. It’s very enjoyable. A short read, but a good one.

Kirsty: Is there something in particular that, without spoilers, that would hit you again?

Declan: Just, I don’t think I could tell any more without giving away any spoilers. The magnitude of it and what they find when they look inside. That’s all I’ll say.

Kirsty: Alright. I’ll have to track it down.

Declan: Yeah.

Kirsty: And our final rapid-fire question is: what is the most challenging book you’ve read this year?

Declan: I’ve had a thought about this one and I’m really not sure. I can’t think of one that was too challenging. I’ve had a few that I had to sort of push myself through because I was told they were really good books. And you’ve got to read the first one hundred pages before you get to the juicy stuff. But I haven’t really read anything too challenging his year. I haven’t tried any of the classics this year, haven’t done anything like that. So, I don’t think I can really name one, unfortunately.

Kirsty: That’s alright. Sometimes we just read for escapism.

Declan: Yeah. And that’s not a bad thing.

Kirsty: No. And which is a lovely segue into a summer reading recommendation.

Declan: Yeah, totally.

Kirsty: Which maybe something like, it may not, but what have you got for us?

Declan: Yeah, it’s not so light. The book I am recommending for the Summer Reads is The Blade Itself by Jod Abercrombie. It’s a sort of high fantasy political drama. It’s an original trilogy and there’s a whole other series in the same world. But the trilogy itself and the world, they’re both known as the First Law. I’m not sure why, just to make it a bit more confusing. Yeah, so the Blade Itself is the one book I’m recommending, the first book of the whole thing. Joe Abercrombie manages to sort of create a world that it’s easy to understand from the outset and even though there might be some sort of cultural barriers, as you get along, and you feel like you begin to know the people, the world, the customs all that sort of stuff. It’s a really well-built fantasy which is lovely to see.

You get to explore from the frozen north to the centre of the supposedly civilised capital of the union. You get to see different regions, cultures, through the ages as it sort of does a bit of a flashback, look forward sort of stuff. Without giving too much away, there is the wizard Bayaz, he brings together four unlikely individuals, five if you include himself to journey where few dare to tread and even fewer return. A classic dystopian fantasy but I love it. I really enjoyed this book and the subsequent series. I’ve always been a fan of fantasy but the world, the people in it, it’s sort of a gritty, grim, dark reality where bad things happen, and the armour is never as thick as you think it is.

The book would probably be suited to people who are a bit more into that sort of thing, for example one of the main characters is an inquisitor. A sort of interrogator for the union. There are some pretty dark scenes that involve that sort of stuff. It might be a bit too much for some readers. Actually, there’s some pretty dark scenes around a lot of the characters that might be a bit much for some readers. But realistically, I think anyone aged fifteen plus who likes fantasy and is OK with a bit of the darker side of things would probably enjoy this book.

Kirsty: OK. Yeah. And Jod’s name is fairly recognisable in fantasy circles.

Declan: Yes. Definitely.

Kirsty: And he’s released so many now it’s good to have that personal recommendation if someone is just looking at a shelf thinking “Which one do I start with?” It sounds like this is a good, maybe entry into his work.

Declan: Yeah definitely. I think you’ll find that with a lot of fantasy authors that have fifteen books or whatever it is, you look at the time or something like that. Something with a large number of books and you wonder, “Where do I even start?” The good thing is Joe Abercrombie, much like Raymond E. Feist, they’ve got an original trilogy that you can sort of build off. So, if you don’t want to read the whole twenty-seven books or whatever it is. You can read the first book and if you enjoy that, maybe you finish the trilogy. And if you really want to there’s a lot more to dig into at the end of it.

Kirsty: Excellent. Maybe this will take people into Autumn and Winter as well.

Declan: Definitely. There’s enough of Joe Abercrombie that you could probably start now and then when we come back around to next year you can get another recommendation to start a new series again.

Kirsty: Yes. Not just a summer reading recommendation.

Declan: Exactly. Yeah.

Kirsty: Well, thank you very much, that all sounds great and if you at home listening would like to read this book, you can borrow it from the library.

Let us know what you think. We always love hearing back from you. So if you’ve read this book or you’ve read something else that you have loved and want to share, drop us a line at recentlyreturned@wyndham.vic.gov.au or leave us a message on the Library’s Facebook page at Libraries in Wyndham.

So, thank you very much Declan for such a great recommendation. And thank you for listening at home and as always, happy reading.

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