



# Season 3, Episode 11: The Book Covers + Title Words that Draw Us In

Mon, October 12, 2020

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:10

Hey readers, welcome to the current reading podcast. We, our bookish best friends spend time every week talking about the books that we read recently. And as you know, especially lately, we're not going to shy away from having strong opinions. So get ready.

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:25

Mm hmm. We are light on the chitchat heavy on the book talk and our descriptions will always be spoiler free. We'll discuss our current reads, a bookish deep dive, and then we'll press books into your hands.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:36

I'm Meredith Monday Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas. And I have spent a lifetime wishing I could just be left alone with my book.

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:46

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom before living in New Mexico. And I am so ready for fall weather and fall reading. This is episode number 11 of season three. And we're so glad you're here.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:57

Oh, Kaytee, it is becoming so nice and fall here in Texas, you're getting that there in New Mexico, too?

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:04

Oh yes, I would even use the word "crisp" occasionally to describe our weather, which is my favorite weather adjective.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 01:11

That is my favorite one, too. I have not yet been able to use it to describe our weather. But we're getting there. We're edging ever closer to crisp.

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:19

It's the best time for reading really.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 01:21

Alright, so before we get too far into the show, last week, we had our Book of the Month ad, which you guys know, if you're paying attention, this week means we are taking out our own ad at the top of the show, which we like to do just once a month because we only have one advertiser. So we are our own other advertiser. We like to talk a little bit about becoming a Patreon supporter of Currently Reading, becoming what we call a "Bookish Friend." So Kaytee, do you want to remind everybody when they get when they become a bookish friend?

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:50

Yes, we have been creating content for the bookish friends now for over a year. So there's all kinds of stuff over there. There's bonus episodes. There's of course, the connection group where you get to hang out with Meredith and I online, there's ways to contribute to the show, and bonuses like spreadsheets and the reading journal. And the absolute joy of knowing that you get to help currently reading podcast stay in your earbuds every week.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 02:13

Absolutely. And you know, as we were getting ready to do this show, and this ad within the show, I was poking back into Patreon. And what it is that we offer to everyone and sort of refreshing my memory, there were two things that stuck out to me that I feel like we haven't talked about in a really long time. And I just want to remind people, that they're part of what they get. One of those things is, several months ago, we did a very deep dive into Still Life, which is the first book in the Three Pines series by Louise Penny. It's an hour and 45 minute video conversation where you Kaytee, me, and Mindy had this conversation. But then you can also see all the comments that were coming in from the 60 to 75 people that took part in it. It's this great conversation about all things Three Pines. About Still Life, the book we talk about, I actually take a run at Enneagram, typing all of the characters, which was kind of interesting. So if you're interested in still life, you've read the book, and you really, really want more conversation around it (spoiler free beyond Still Life, so we're not going to ruin the whole series for you). So that's available to our bookish friends. And then the other thing, Kaytee, that I had actually, almost forgotten about, but is actually worth the price of entry, just on its own is the reading log that you created for our bookish friends. If anybody is wanting a better way to track their reading, or you've been thinking, "I kind of keep a little notebook in my purse, but I want something that gives me the ability to track it on a deeper level, so that I can have some stats at the end of my reading year." This reading log is so great. It's easy to use, it's beautiful. And the kinds of stats that you have created that come from, you know, entering your reading into that are really, really amazing. So that to me is just it's worth the price of entry right there. So lots of good things if you want to become a supporter, and also it does definitely help us not have other ads in the show. So once we get to talking about books, you don't have to worry that we're going to take any other ad breaks. So you can support us by going to [patreon.com/currentlyreadingpodcast](https://patreon.com/currentlyreadingpodcast) and become a bookish friend for \$5 a month. All right, Kaytee, let's get into what we all are here for let's start out telling them that our deep dive later in the show is going to be about the words that can be in the title of a book that make us very interested in a book, and also what a cover the kinds of things they can put on a cover that make us want to read that book. I'm excited about this deep dive.

**Kaytee Cobb** 04:53

Mm hmm. For me, it's like book catnip. I'm very excited, too.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 04:56

Right. What are the things that make you really, really drawn to a book? All right. Before we get to that, let's talk about our Bookish Moments of the Week. What is your bookish moment this week, Kaytee?

**Kaytee Cobb** 05:08

All right, this week, I had an in real life friend, reach out to me. And she had kind of a sensitive issue that she's trying to work through in her own life. And she wanted some books to read, to learn and to deepen her understanding of said issue. I don't think she listens to the podcast, but our shared history, and her seeing me share my monthly reads and other books made her comfortable to reach out to me and share this hard thing that she's been dealing with. Even though we haven't seen each other in person for three or four years. Of course, that's plenty bookish, right. But the really bookish part for me was that it just reminded me of how books can connect us in really unexpected ways. And how books can bring this new like, depth and understanding to what might be otherwise a very scary unknown in our lives. So I just I was really grateful for her, for the readers that trust me with their hard stuff. And for the chance to kind of hold her hand and put a book into her other hand, at the same time, even though it was digital. But just to be like, I'm here for you. And so is this book.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 06:12

right, which is the perfect one, two punch of friendship.

**Kaytee Cobb** 06:15

Yeah, I agree for sure.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 06:17

All right, my bookish moment of the week is, it's that moment, you realize you are having the reading experience, you really want to be having. Has this happened to you, Kaytee, where you're, for whatever reason, the book that you're reading is just, it just feels exactly right for the mood you're in the time of year that you're reading in, the kind of reading that your brain will allow you to do. I had this experience this week, I won't tell you exactly what book it is because I have not finished yet. So I'm not ready to talk about it. But I think I'm going to love it. And I'm going to talk about as a current read later, but my bookish moment was just realizing it doesn't happen all the time with every single book. But when it does, and you're just like, I am having so much fun. This is why I read this is just exactly why reading is my favorite. I was just a wash in that feeling very, very suddenly this week, and I want to be present in it because I'm really grateful for it when it happens.

**Kaytee Cobb** 07:16

I love that feeling, too. It's the best.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 07:19

That's good. All right, let's get into our recent reads. Kaytee, what do you have first for us this week?

**Kaytee Cobb** 07:25

Okay, my first one comes from our Zoom calls that we did. So way back in June, you and I and Mindy all did a couple Zoom calls where we had between 15 and 20 bookish friends on a Zoom call with us and we took like an hour and a half to hear from them and just get to chat with them in person. And one of our bookish friends Casey Gregerson decided to press a book into my hands. And so she told me that I should read some titles from Bianca Marais. Bianca is a South African author. And I read her second novel, which is called "If You Want to Make God Laugh." Casey said that they didn't have to be read in order. So, I was trusting her on that. This story centers on three women in the time in South Africa immediately post-Apartheid. So, we have Zodwa who is a teen when we meet her and she's facing an unexpected pregnancy. Zodwa, her portion of the audiobook is voiced by Bonnie Turpin. So as I started listening to this book, I was like, "Oh, yes." I was so happy.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 08:26

Yes.

**Kaytee Cobb** 08:28

Because I just knew I was in good hands. Our second storyline is Ruth, who is a very wealthy but "aging," and I'm using that term gently here, Meredith, she's probably mid to late 40s, early 50s, socialite, right. So she feels like she's gotten so old. But really, she just is not able to relive her glory days as like a teenage ingenue. So right when we meet her, she is planning her own suicide.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 08:57

Oh, no,

**Kaytee Cobb** 08:58

I think those fall into the category of fantastic titles and great covers to just for our later conversation. I mean, she really hits both of those things, because those have been on my radar. And I didn't even really know the content of the actual story, which sounds great. So she's hitting those things to getting that part really, right.

**Kaytee Cobb** 08:58

She can she can no longer face her life as it is. That is a trigger warning. Of course, it does not succeed. She is part of the book for the entire time. So, know that going in because I picked it up and I was like, "wow, this gets intense really fast. I I don't know about this whole plan," right. And then third, we have Delilah. Delilah used to be a nun. And now is coming back to South Africa after spending many years disgraced by the church in Zaire working in an orphanage. So all three of these storylines, of course, end up intertwining there's an abandoned infant, we have to solve the mystery of what happened with this baby. Figure out how all three women end up having this relationship that turns into an entire book that I could not put down. It was fantastic. I just I love the way that she gave us these intertwining lives. I couldn't wait to figure out what happened next. And I rode this roller coaster of emotions. listening to this novel. I'll definitely be picking the first one which is called "Hum if You Don't Know the Words," because I feel like Bianca Marais is a very gifted storyteller, and I felt like I was in really good hands throughout this book. So that was, "If You Want to Make God Laugh" by Bianca Marais.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 10:32

All right, my first "read" this week, and I'm going to put air quotes around it because it's an Audible Original. So I've talked about a couple Audible Originals on the show, and we've decided that we can count them as reads even though they aren't available as an actual book that you could go buy in the store. Right. So this is just available in audio, but this one was really, really good. And it's been forever since I've done some nonfiction, but I listened to a book called "The Real Sherlock" and it's by a broadcaster and a journalist named Lucinda Hawksley. This was six fascinating segments/episodes, however you want to think about it, chapters, however you want to think about it about Arthur Conan Doyle. And of course you guys all know I'm a huge Sherlock Holmes fan. I've read everything that he's... all the Sherlock stories I've read many, many, many offshoots and Sherlock redos and you know, I just this is something that I love. So getting to really learn about Arthur Conan Doyle was absolutely fascinating to me.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 11:35

This Audible Original gets into a ton of detail about his life, about his career as a doctor, which very much informed the Sherlock stories and she, Lucinda Huxley, gets access to his family to talk about who he who Arthur Conan Doyle was in real life, his conversations as he was writing, Sherlock Holmes and all of the stories and kind of why he did it. Spoiler alert, they were making him a lot of money. And at first, he really was only doing it for that reason. And then he created this amazing character. So there was just so much about my love of the stories that was deepened by knowing their inspirations, the way that they came together.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 12:19

I also did not realize that Arthur Conan Doyle has written a lot of other work beyond the Sherlock Holmes cannon. He wrote a book called "The Lost World," which actually is the inspiration for "Jurassic Park." Yeah, so very, very interesting. I just, I loved the way that "The Real Sherlock" was put together. It was incredibly listenable. It's a full cast recording in that you're hearing all of these different voices from his family, to academics who've spent their entire lives studying Sherlock Holmes, which How great is that? And then also actors who've played Dr. Watson and Sherlock Holmes on the stage and what they brought to the character. It's just absolutely fascinating. I liked it a lot. So it's not going to be for everybody. But if you like Sherlock Holmes, I highly recommend looking into the Audible Original called "The Real Sherlock" by Lucinda Hawksley.

**Kaytee Cobb** 13:17

That does sound exactly perfect for Meredith. I'm so glad that you found that.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 13:22

It was really really fun.

**Kaytee Cobb** 13:25

I believe you. I see the way that you're lighting up. I believe you.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 13:28

All right. What's your next read?

**Kaytee Cobb** 13:31

Okay. My next read is "Anxious People" by Frederick Backman. Okay.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 13:36

I've been really really waiting to hear what you thought of it. You've been quiet. You've been quiet about it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 13:43

I have been.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 13:44

Uh, oh.

**Kaytee Cobb** 13:44

Okay. That's because I am a huge Backman fan girl. Like I should probably have a T shirt that says "I love Frederick Backman" or a tattoo or something. I'm obsessed. It's a little like obscene the way that I love him. I like crush hard on him on Instagram. So this is kind of a weird review. Because not only am I an outlier within my own reading life, like I'm outlying myself, but I'm also definitely an outlier in the bookish community because I did not love this book.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 14:16

Oh, no.

**Kaytee Cobb** 14:17

I did not love this book.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 14:18

Oh, I'm so sorry.

**Kaytee Cobb** 14:20

I thought it was kind of meh. So the premise of this novel sounds exciting. We've got this bank robber who's robbing dreams are foiled. At the bank discovers this is a cashless bank. There's nobody to rob here.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 14:33

Oops.

**Kaytee Cobb** 14:33

So this person runs across the street to try and escape the police that are of course on their way and ends up in an open house in an apartment with eight to 10 other people, a real estate agent, all the stuff, so decides to take them hostage, right. And that's the beginning of the story. The novel then

unfolds with these kind of backwards vignettes into each of the lives of the people in this apartment. And forward looking into the police station when they're doing interviews with each of the different hostages of the situation. And the way that that timing was put together, it was just way too jumbled for me. It was like, "oh, now we're back 10 years in this person's life. Oh, now we're forward in the afternoon when everything is resolved. Oh, now now we're back over here again. Oh, now we're at the bank." Like what? What is happening? It was a little scattered for me.

**Kaytee Cobb** 15:27

And then for, also for me, like, lots of people love this book. I am not telling anybody that you have to feel the way that I did. So many people have this book. But for me, it did not have the endearing lovable characters of "A Man Called Ove." It didn't have the sweet fantasy element of "My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry." And it didn't have the hard hitting, and really deep emotional resonance of "Us Against You" and "Beartown." So it kind of felt adrift, like he didn't have somewhere to like, put a flag down and say, This is what this book is about. Like I said, pretty much everybody does not think this way. But if you are one of the very few readers who agreed, just know that you're not alone, that I even as a raging fangirl could not get myself to fall in love with this book The way that I really wanted to, because I'm always waiting for the next Frederick Backman. So unfortunately, "Anxious People" by Frederick Backman was not it.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 16:31

I'm so sorry. I know what a huge disappointment it is when a book comes out by an author that you love. I'm sorry about that though.

**Kaytee Cobb** 16:39

It happens. I'm still gonna read his next one. I still love him.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 16:42

Right? Right. One book is not gonna put you off of him entirely. Good.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 16:46

Okay, so my next book is memorable for me in that this is one that I talked about a little bit on a COVID(eo) that I was in a serious book slump. I was in a really, really bad like days long book slump. And my husband Finally I was kidding crankier and crankier, just like it was just one of those times you know how we're doing COVID we've had we have these times we ebb and flow, I was in a really, really bad headspace. So finally Johnny just puts me like, sends me into our bedroom. He walks in there with me. And he's like, you need to just pick up and read a book for an hour. And he reaches behind him literally completely blindly. He reaches behind him to my bookshelf. Now it's a bookshelf that he happens to know is a full bookshelf of books I have not read yet. So he knew that whatever he chose was a book that I hadn't read yet. But I had chosen saying I wanted to read it right. So he's choosing from good books. But he reaches back blindly, and picks this book up and hands it to me and he says, I don't want to see you for an hour. And he sort of pushes me gently towards the bed, you know, to go read.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 17:54

And I was like First of all, who does that? Who picks a book like that? That is that that is not okay to pick a book like that.

**Kaytee Cobb** 18:01

Russian Roulette.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 18:02

Yeah, that is not okay. But you know, at that point, I needed something to get me out of my slump. So I grabbed the book, which happened to be "Lock Every Door" by Riley Sager. I grabbed the book, and I sat down and started reading it and would you know it, I read it in just a couple of hours start to finish ended up staying late, that staying up late that night. And it definitely got me reading again. So this is the setup, I won't go into a ton of detail because it was everywhere on bookstagram. Just to remind you, this is the Riley Sager that has the kind of pink cover. And the setup is that there's this gigantic apartment that is in Manhattan in one of the highest profile buildings in Manhattan. And it is there's a job posting up that says that they are wanting to pay someone this huge amount of money to live in this absolutely gorgeous apartment. Right? Okay, that's weird, right? All of our little red flags are going up.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 19:02

But there are of course, a few rules. You can't have any visitors. You can't spend any nights away from the apartment, and you cannot disturb in any way shape or form any of the other residents in the building. Okay, all of those things are strange, and I think big, fat red flags. But you know who they weren't a big, fat red flag to Jules Larson, our hapless leader character who is down on her luck in many, many ways. And she sees this as being a life saving opportunity. She jumps at the chance, in fact, to be paid a ridiculous sum to live in an amazing apartment with these weird rules.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 19:48

You're not going to be surprised then to find that things are not what they seem at the Bartholomew and people have recently been going missing. That's our story. That's our setup. Okay. liked this book, I read this book in just a few hours, you could not have taken it from my hands. Let's be super clear about that. Riley Sager, as far as I'm concerned, I recently talked about "Home Before Dark," which I loved, loved, loved, loved. That was actually my first Riley Sager that I'd ever read. And I really liked "Lock Every Door." But one of the things that I struggle with in books me in particular, is anytime there is a situation or a setup, where it's so clearly too good to be true. There are so many reasons that someone should be giving side-eye to whatever this situation is, but nope, our lead characters just just bounce right in super happy to you know, have happened, whatever is going to happen next. And it just makes me automatically set against that lead character. This poor Jules in this instance. I just was kind of hoping bad things would happen to her because she was so flippin stupid. You know what I mean? Like, really? And the more things that happen throughout the story, you're just like, yep, yep. What did you think? I mean, not like it was predicted. Like, I mean, it was predictable to certain extent, but not like in a bad way. But just like, okay, Jules, you're going to get out now? Nope. Nope, we're gonna still continue. Okay. So it's just like, that whole thing. Just makes me go, oh, people who are stupid in books is really tough for me. But I read this whole book like and it was, it was a great reading experience as



far as keeping me very, very interested the whole time, at least to see what bad things were gonna happen to poor Jules. So that was "Lock Every Door" by Riley Sager.

**Kaytee Cobb** 21:41

You know what I thought he did a really great job with in this book is creating the Bartholomew for us. Yeah, we're here like, I have I seen this building before. Like I was googling.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 21:50

Yeah, me too.

**Kaytee Cobb** 21:51

Does this building actually exist? Yeah, because it's so very clearly depicted. I like that a lot.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 21:56

Yeah, no, I did, too. The Bartholomew as almost a character in the story was really, really interesting and the backstory and all of that. But again, Riley Sager is really good at what he does. I mean, he's just flat out good at that. So you know, was it perfect? No, but it was a very enjoyable reading experience. And sometimes that's exactly what you need. At least for me to get out of a reading slump. I just I didn't need the perfect book. That's my part of my slump. I was waiting for the perfect book, when I needed was just a book that was gonna kick me in the patoot. And that's exactly what happened. So perfect.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 22:34

All right, Kaytee, what's your next book?

**Kaytee Cobb** 22:36

My third book this week is called "Rebel" by Beverly Jenkins. This one was handed to me on a platter by listener Katie and I'm probably gonna butcher her last name Katie probably Sikkes, Sikkes. S-I-K-K-E-S, she's on Instagram. You can go find her over there with an underscore in between her names. She mentioned that she had purchased three copies of this book to give away to friends. So I'm like, Oh, I wonder what this is about. And I go look it up on Goodreads to see what she is excited about. This book is steamy, delightful historical romance.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 23:10

Whoo.

**Kaytee Cobb** 23:11

Set immediately after the Civil War, we have our main character Valinda Lacey, and she's spending some time in New Orleans Louisiana, teaching at a Freedman's school where she helps newly freed slaves and their children learn to read and write. Cool. I'm like googling "freedmen schools" when I'm reading about this. Excellent. I want to learn more about New Orleans and the Civil War and what Louisiana was like at the time.

**Kaytee Cobb** 23:37

She is on her way home from the schoolhouse one day, gets into, of course, a spot of trouble and is valiantly rescued by our hero, Captain Drake LaVeq who is an old money Cajun French hot dish of a man who is smart and bold and passionate and just tasty all around. He is delicious.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 24:00

Nice!

**Kaytee Cobb** 24:01

Drake and Val's paths, of course start intersecting more and more, and sparks start to fly. But Val has some previous entanglements that and some family issues and commitments that she has to work through before anything can go anywhere. That does not stop them from teasing and building tension between the two of them and the steam factor in this one is legit. This is not constant romantic situations. But the description in those romantic situations is vivid, I will say...

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 24:32

Steamy.

**Kaytee Cobb** 24:32

And when we get to the bedroom. The door is open.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 24:35

Okay. Good to know.

**Kaytee Cobb** 24:37

That's what you need to know going into this one. Here's my fun slash silly confession about this one. I wrote to a friend. I have never wanted to take notes so badly during a historical romance. And of course, I'm not talking about the sex scenes. Oh, I'm talking about the way

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 24:52

I was. I was kind of hoping that it was like wow, okay, might there be more to learn?

**Kaytee Cobb** 24:58

We could have a little course about this!

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 25:00

Nice.

**Kaytee Cobb** 25:01

No, I'm talking about the world that Beverly Jenkins built. You can tell she dove deep into her research, figuring out what New Orleans was like immediately post-Civil War. She, of course has the romance, the romance stuff, she's got that down as well. But the historical stuff that I learned reading this book, I wanted to take notes, which is ridiculous. It's all historical romance. Stop back away from the pencil,

Kaytee, just flip the pages, but I loved it. This is the first in her Women Who Dare series and I will definitely be picking up some more, because I really enjoyed "Rebel" by Beverly Jenkins.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 25:38

That sounds really, really good.

**Kaytee Cobb** 25:41

It's so good. It's so good.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 25:44

That sounds really good. Okay.

**Kaytee Cobb** 25:45

I am blushy right now.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 25:46

Well, okay. So I am going to pair that book, probably think really perfectly with my next book, which is five star book alert. And I have been waiting to talk to you guys about this book. Because this is one of those books that I want to press into everyone's hands. Now I do want to say, unlike your book, this book can actually be pressed into a like it's not theirs. It's not open door at all. But it is so much fun in a lot of the same ways. So I read Grave Mercy. And this is the first book in the His Fair Assassin series. It's by Robin LaFevers. You guys, this one is really, really good. I absolutely loved this book.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 26:26

So basically, as the book starts out, our lead character is 17 year old Isme. And she is basically being forced into an arranged marriage that is going we can see is going to be horrible. Kaytee, have you read this book, by the way?

**Kaytee Cobb** 26:43

No, I haven't, I'm taking notes.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 26:45

Okay. So is she's getting ready to be forced into this arranged marriage that we can see is going to be horrible and violent and awful. And one of the things I love about this book is from the first page, you are right there with Isme, you are like so hoping that things turned out okay, from the very, very first page. And these first scenes in the first few pages of her sort of escaping this arranged marriage, my heart was beating really, really quickly. So basically, I won't give away too many spoilers, but she is saved from this arranged marriage and she is taken to this convent called St Mortain. And the Sisters of this convent serve some very old gods. And when she is brought there, she is basically told you've been saved, because we recognize the god of death has recognized that you have been blessed with some very serious skills. And if you want to have a very different life than the life that you had planned, you can stay here and be trained by the Sisters of St. Mortain to basically be a handmaiden to death to be an assassin.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 28:03

Isme, it turns out, has a lot of magic in her that she did not realize that she had and so properly trained it can be used in some pretty amazing ways. By the way, the setting here: 15th century Brittany. So this amazing, lush historical setting, this fantastic lead character, a romance that is as good as the romance in "A Curse So Dark and Lonely." I mean, it is but it's closed door. It's really In fact, in my notes, I really I made a note to myself to say you could you know you could give this to your older teen daughter this is this is this is not steamy in that sort of way. But from a romance perspective, even this 47 year old mom of four was like, Oh, I hope these two get together. This book was fantastic. It had just the right mix of history, interest, incredible plot, great characters, the convent and the sisters there and their training of his fair assassins is absolutely fascinating. And then like I said, you become so invested in the romance that's at the heart of this story. So I highly recommend if you liked "A Curse So Dark and Lonely" if you liked ACOTAR which I can never remember what...

**Kaytee Cobb** 29:27

"A Court of Thorns and Roses"

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 29:28

Right, so that series, if you like that series, hightail yourself to grave mercy because you will absolutely love it. It is fantastic. That's "Grave Mercy" by Robin LaFevvers. I'm so glad I found it and I immediately went out and bought the second book, but "Grave Mercy" by the way, it stands alone in and of itself. It doesn't end on a on too bad a cliffhanger. You didn't have you don't have to do that. But just know it's there if you if you love it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 29:58

That's amazing. I'm so excited. I'm going to find it. I'm going to read it. I'll report back, of course.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 30:03

Yeah, it's if you like fairy tale vibes and historical fiction, romance vibes you got to get you got to get this book and it's got a beautiful cover too.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 30:11

Alright, so speaking of great covers, which Grave Mercy has and your picks a couple of your picks had fantastic ones too. Let's talk about bookish catnip, Kaytee. Let's talk about those things that when we go to the library, or we go to the bookstore, to a lesser extent when we look online and on bookstagram, what are the things that are in either the title of a book that you are drawn to? Or in the way that a book actually looks? What's that bookish catnip for you? What was the first thing that popped up in your mind when we when we talked when you thought about this?

**Kaytee Cobb** 30:48

Okay, the first and also dumbest thing that first popped into my mind when I thought about this deep dive was when I look at my rainbow bookshelf, which is where I keep my TBR everything else is done in alphabetical order. My one wing is strong, but I like that little shot of rainbow in my house. There are hardly any purple books ever on my shelf. I love purple books. I want more covers with purple on them.

I'm so glad that the third in a curse. Oh, dark and lonely is going to be a purple book. Like it's so dumb. But I will read a purple book. I don't care what's in it.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 31:21

Yeah, well. So the very first thing I thought of is that might so my signature color is a color that we call Penelope blue. But for a lot of people it's called peacock blue. It's that like very, very rich, dark mix of dark blue and green. It's a teal, but it leans toward blue, not toward like a tropical kind of teal.

**Kaytee Cobb** 31:44

Navy teal.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 31:45

Exactly right. And so you see some of that in our new branding for Currently Reading and, you know, I've painted my front door that color I've painted walls in my house that color i've you know, it's my absolute favorite color. There is no question that when I see a book that has that color strongly in the cover, I am at least going to pick it up to see if it looks like something that I'm interested in. And one of the books that always attracts me, for that reason is "The Essex Serpent." Yeah, that's got such a great cover that has a lot of cat nippy things for me, right too. It's got that color. It's got also like a, like a really bright yellow. And that combination of those two colors is really something that's attractive to me. And then it's also got like, an interesting title. It's got that perfect combination. I know there are entire departments in publishing companies, right, who are trying to figure out what are the colors? What are the words that we're attracted to? I wish I knew exactly why, by the way, I've tried to read the Essex serpent multiple times. I can't get very far into it. But man, that the cover in the title keep drawing me back. Why is it I wish I could figure out exactly what it is other than just like, you know, I'm kind of like a shiny object. I'm attracted to a shiny object.

**Kaytee Cobb** 33:11

I am also attracted to shiny objects and gold foil on a cover, or like silver foil will totally draw me in. But the next thing that I thought of with regard to this is that kind of illuminated manuscript look on the front of a book. I'm talking about "Hamnet," again, of course, we're that H has certain like things hidden in it. And I do feel like we get kind of a little gentler version of that illuminated manuscript feel with some of the other illustrated covers that we see like "Five Feet Apart" by Mikki Daughtry and Rachel Lippincott or "The Muse" by Jessie Burton. So it's got illustrations, but then there's little small things worked into that illustration. So you want to keep looking at it. You want to keep seeing if, oh, I wonder if that's gonna play into the story somehow. No, I love covers like that.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 34:01

Yeah. Well, I mean, so speaking of illustrators, so that was one thing that occurred to me, that often draws me especially to middle grade, is a fantastic Illustrator. My number one most favorite is the illustrator who does the "Winterhouse" books, Chloe Bristol, and she, there's something about her style that exactly what you're talking about. There's layers to the illustrations and to the cover even that make you want to look and look again and look again, and sort of the way that they've done those "Winterhouse" covers. They're these multi layer covers. So there's something sort of from the back layer that's showing through the front layer, kind of like you're looking into a window. I absolutely. I

really love it. "The Extremely Inconvenient Adventures of Bronte Mettlestone" has that same kind of cover look to it, which is very, very attractive to me. I think it takes me back to when I was a kid those same kinds of colors. would have attracted me when I was seven and eight, nine years old as a reader.

**Kaytee Cobb** 35:05

So that's like Pavlovian, then.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 35:07

Yeah, I think so. I think so it definitely makes me feel like a little girl again. Yeah.

**Kaytee Cobb** 35:13

Okay, so I also like really, really graphic covers, like, let's see, like "Grave Mercy," where it's just really bold images or bold text. "Anxious People" has really bold images kind of woven through or bold text woven through the images. I'm also thinking of stuff like "With the Fire on High" from Elizabeth Acevedo, "The Hunger Games," "The Girl with the Louding Voice"

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 35:37

Yes.

**Kaytee Cobb** 35:37

Those all have that like, like the color combinations and just how bold they are make me want to run towards those covers.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 35:45

Yeah. I also when I was looking at the covers for the books that I've read over the last couple years realize I'm very attracted to lush florals. Mm hmm. For whatever reason, when that's on a cover, that's going to be something that's that's of interest to me. Here's a weird thing that I found. And actually, I don't think this is going to take a lot of figurin' to figure out why it is. But I'm attracted to the word "perfect" in a title.

**Kaytee Cobb** 36:10

Huh, weird?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 36:11

Yeah. Right. It's not difficult to figure out. But in my reading, I can see it. And I also can see that a lot of the books that have the word perfect in the title ended up being DNF. For me.

**Kaytee Cobb** 36:28

That's more interesting to me.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 36:29

They're putting it into titles a lot more, it's kind of become part and parcel with the way that we're seeing "girl" and "woman" and "wife" a lot is especially in thriller titles. And that word "perfect," often is there to

kind of mean something quickly. But oftentimes, when I actually try to get into the reading of that book, more often than not, it doesn't draw me in the book itself is not enough to keep me reading,

**Kaytee Cobb** 36:58

I find that the word that pulls me in, and then often disappoints me, there bookshop, and library, of course, I want to read all those books. And a lot of times I'm like, Ah, this could have been better. And then I know you mentioned a wife with regard to thrillers. But I will say that if I see like, the so and so's wife, and it's somebody famous from history, and I know that then this is going to be a book about the woman who stood behind a famous man and helped him and like her journey. I love books like that. So like "Ahab's Wife," "The Other Einstein," like all these, whoever, where it's like you get to see whoever was behind, you know, like Hamilton's wife, "My Dear Hamilton," those kind of things where I know that's what the wife is communicating, rather than, like, this is the wife that died, or this is the wife that did the killing in the thriller version of this title.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 37:51

Okay, so what you're saying is that "Hamnet" did a great job on their cover, which we all know that "Hamnet" has maybe the best cover the entire year, the British version, but if it had been called "Shakespeare's wife," you would be more interested in reading it picked it up?

**Kaytee Cobb** 38:08

Yeah, yeah. I do think that's true. Is that what we're going to subtitle it because then I'll probably just go get it now.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 38:14

Spoiler alert: That's what it's about, Kaytee.

**Kaytee Cobb** 38:17

Dang it!

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 38:20

I'm just telling you, I'm not saying that. I still don't think you should read it. But I'm just saying, from a titling perspective, is has has titled me done something that has actually stood in the way because a lot of people have been like, Wait, is it Hamlet? Hamnet? I don't understand. What is this book about? And that's a very interesting part of the book publishing world is like when you decide on a title, you kind of live and die by it because a lot of people are making decisions based on that.

**Kaytee Cobb** 38:50

So true. And so outside of that, there's also, have you seen the fantasy title generators? Like I think the fantasy titles are so overdone. Yeah, but I like "A Court of Thorns and Roses" that feels like it just got plugged into a name generator to me, you know?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 39:07

Maybe that's why it's so hard to actually remember.

**Kaytee Cobb** 39:11

I think that's probably true. But I went and found a YA fantasy title generator, and I found out that my title would be "The Kingdom of Dust and Ash" and yours, Meredith, would be "The Girl of Rain and Ravens" and I would read both of those books. Absolutely.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 39:26

Holy Hannah. I for the first time in my life want to write a book. Tell me again what the what my title is cuz it's perfect.

**Kaytee Cobb** 39:33

Yours is "The Girl of Rain and Ravens."

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 39:37

Oh, my god.

**Kaytee Cobb** 39:38

I mean then you have the girl in there but

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 39:40

yeah, right well so right girl/wife/woman is overdone but it's overdone because it works. Kaytee, I think that's going to be a best seller. That is that is absolutely perfect.

**Kaytee Cobb** 39:50

Mine sounds very like you're parched. If you're reading "The Kingdom of Dust and Ash." There's a drought obviously and fire but it's very dry.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 39:57

It's, well, it's serious. I could see like a black and gold, you know, like a, like a really beautiful black and gold cover. Both of those are absolutely fantastic. So, yeah, I mean, I think it would be interesting kind of like I love to think about how they come up with paint colors. I think it would be very interesting if somebody would kind of pull the the rug up so that we can see what it actually is involved in making some of these decisions about covers, cover art, and titles, because we know that the author often doesn't have the, you know, the final say or really any say at all when it comes to cover. So I think that's a really interesting part of the publishing world.

**Kaytee Cobb** 40:40

Yeah, maybe we could, if there's somebody out there listening, let us know. Maybe we could do a minisode on this. I'm really interested in this for sure.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 40:48

Yeah, for sure. All right. So let's talk a little bit then about books that we have truly, truly loved, not just for what was on the front or what it was called. But for actually what happens in the book. What do you want to press this week, Kaytee?



**Kaytee Cobb** 41:02

Okay, I did start thinking along the lines, of course, of books that drew me and from the cover, and this one is strikingly graphic. You've seen it everywhere, though. I decided this week. I'm going to press "Wonder" by RJ Palacio. And I read this in 2016. And I went back to read my review of it. And then I clicked on her author photo, and I was just kind of checking things out with regard to her. Turns out before she wrote "Wonder" she used to design covers of novels. I am not even kidding.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 41:34

Oh, wow. Okay. Okay.

**Kaytee Cobb** 41:36

So maybe she's who we need to have on the podcast for minisode. I don't know, you might have some insight for us. She did not design her own cover, though, for "Wonder," this book. Oh, my goodness, you guys, this is a tissues book. Like just know that going in. Because what happened to me was I borrowed it from a library in 2016. Before I really had a handle on my digital library collection. So I borrowed it on CD, and listen to it in the car with my children, which was great. We had some great discussions about it. But at one point, mommy had to pull over the car to the side of the road. And because there was not, we could not be driving. This was not safe, right? So they were like, Mommy, are you okay up there? Like it. This is a powerfully emotional book.

**Kaytee Cobb** 42:21

Auggie is our main character he's born with as it's termed in the book and the blurb "a facial difference." And up until his fifth grade year, he is homeschooled in order to keep him out of that like rough, early/middle elementary school situation where bullying does happen, especially to kids who are different. He ends up in his fifth grade year, he's going to school for the first time. And we get to see Auggie go through this transformation, and he's trying to make friends. He just wants to be normal. And we hear we're hearing from him quite often. And then we're hearing from the kids that he's meeting and his sister and her boyfriend and just these various other people that are part of Auggie's life. The way that this story comes together, it's so gorgeous. It is very much one of those ones that I wish I could you know sob through again for the first time, like we talked about last week. It's so lovely and there's so much to glean for your kids and for yourself in this book. I mean, everybody I feel like everybody's read this but if you haven't, my son will tell you that it is worth picking up. He's read it many a time. And I would agree with him. It's "Wonder" by RJ Palacio.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 43:34

This is one of Jackson's favorites too so it turns out Jackson actually likes the super emotional reads just like you do like he's he's into a really emotional everybody's Yes. Yes that's that's when the I have not read I will not be reading it because it just every trigger there is just too difficult for me but I have certainly heard that is a mazing so perfect addition to the press list. All right. I also was thinking back to covers and pulled out one of the ones that I loved so much and was so delighted because it has one of my favorite covers ever and that is "The Murmur of Bees" by Sophia Segovia. I love the cover on this book but much more importantly, I love the book inside and as we get into fall for a lot of people when they go into fall, they want spooky reads. This is not spooky. But a lot of other people who are not looking for scary spooky, they really want books that are have a lot of heft and character development

and our little bit quieter but something that is really going to allow them to sit with it and be get really involved in the story. And this book is perfect for that. So our story starts with we have old, old, old Nana Reja ha and she is she lives on the plantation, a citrus plantation in Mexico, which is this gorgeous setting. And we're at the beginning of the 20th century. So the early 1900s. She finds a baby who's been abandoned under a bridge. And the baby is disfigured and covered in a blanket of bees. And these bees travel with him everywhere all the time they protect him they never ever heard him.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 45:20

They named the baby Simonopio. And immediately, of course, because of the way that he looks, and because of the bees, which is weird, the locals are kind of set against him. But very luckily he is taken in by the family, Nana Reja's family, the mirallas family and they adopt for him adopt him and they care for him. And as he grows up, it becomes clear that Simonopio is different in a lot of ways. He knows a lot of things before they happen. But he's this incredible character, who's just sort of love incarnate. The story is amazing. It's sweeping. It is a book in translation. So if you're looking for something on if you have a reading challenge list, and you need that this is a fantastic one, because it's so very readable. And it I do want to say that it is a major part of the story is the 1918 Spanish flu epidemic. So trigger warning that that is there and it's you know, it's it's very intense. Those parts of the book are very, very intense. So I do want you to be aware of that as we go into the fall. But this book is, I mean, it's very, very beautiful. I for all my plot loving, let's just move it and groove it forward as fast as we can. This book is one of those that I enjoyed so deeply. Certainly if you have recently read "Hamnet" and thought, "I need another book that is going to kind of be like that for me," I would definitely recommend "The Murmur of Bees" by Sophia Segovia. It is gorgeous.

**Kaytee Cobb** 47:01

It is gorgeous. I would absolutely use that adjective for that book. And the cover is gorgeous as well.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 47:06

Yeah. Yeah. It's wonderful.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 47:08

All right. That is it for this week. As a reminder, here's where you can connect with us. I'm Meredith @meredith.reads on Instagram.

**Kaytee Cobb** 47:16

And you can find me, Kaytee, @notesonbookmarks on Instagram.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 47:20

Full show notes with the title of every book we mentioned in the episode and timestamps, so you can zoom right to where we talked about it can be found at our website at [currentlyreadingpodcast.com](http://currentlyreadingpodcast.com).

**Kaytee Cobb** 47:30

You can also contact us directly @currentlyreadingpodcast on Instagram or via email at [currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com](mailto:currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com).

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 47:38

And if you really want to help us rate and review us on Apple podcasts, that's a big help to us even more, so shout us out on social media. Shout us out to your friends that makes a huge difference toward us finding our exact right audience.

**Kaytee Cobb** 47:52

Yes, your recommendation to your bookish best friend is the best way to pass along your love of podcast to others and help us continue to grow. Thanks for doing that.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 48:01

Alright, until next week. Happy reading, Kaytee.

**Kaytee Cobb** 48:03

Happy reading, Meredith.