



Season 3, Episode 36: Bookish Friendships + Books About Books and Bookstores

Mon, 4/19 • 44:30

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:10

Hey readers, welcome to the Currently Reading podcast. We are bookish best friends who spend time every week talking about the books that we've read recently. And as you already know, we will not shy away from having strong opinions. So get ready.

Kaytee Cobb 00:25

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 00:34

I'm Meredith Monday Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas and bookish friends bring me comfort, even when my reading is a little slumpy.

Kaytee Cobb 00:44

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico. And when I can't go to the bookstore, I'll visit one in my reading. This is episode number 36 of season three, and we're so glad you're here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:55

That's a good way to look at it, Kaytee, that we can visit bookstores even if we can't visit bookstores, although hopefully we're getting to the place where we can visit a lot of bookstores.

Kaytee Cobb 01:03

I know. That's my plan. Let's let everybody know before we get started that today, as you may or may not have guessed, our deep dive is going to be about books about books and bookstores. So we're going to visit some bookstores. Literarily today, just gonna make up some adverbs. How does that sound?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:21

Yes, that's perfect.

Kaytee Cobb 01:22

But first, we're gonna get started the way we always do, which is with our bookish moments of the week, Meredith, what do you have for us?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:29

Alright, well, there is no question that my bookish moment of the week was the fact that A: I got over my fear of putting out on to the Currently Reading Bookish Friends group right? Our, the Patreon group that we are going to have a an Austin area, Bookish Friends meet up and we are going to do a book swap. Now I have to tell you, and I'm being completely honest with you, I thought that we were going to have maybe four or five of us. And so I was like, oh, we'll do like a Currently Reading kind of book club type of situation...no, there's going to be 35 people that are that are going to be there, which is so awesome. It's going to be an epic book swap. Hopefully, we'll get some gorgeous weather. And we'll do it outside and socially distance and all of that good stuff, although I think most people who RSVP have been vaccinated. So that just kind of adds a nice level of reassurance to everybody. But we will be very, very safe when we get together. And I think we're gonna have a really good time. I'm looking forward to it quite a bit.

Kaytee Cobb 02:29

I'm excited for that day. And I'm excited to see what happens all across the country that day, I think it's gonna be bigger than even you or I know.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 02:39

I know. Well, and to be fair, in that first thread, where I sort of threw out the idea of doing it to test the waters, there were so many sub threads amongst the Bookish Friends who were like, Well I don't live in Austin, but maybe we can do it in Wisconsin, maybe we can do it in Chicago and kind of were just Bookish Friends were deciding to meet up amongst themselves. And that whole, like, where we can go from online friends to in real life friends, because books bring us together so easily. And we know we'll have plenty to talk about. I think that's really fun.

Kaytee Cobb 03:08

Yeah, I think so too. I'm excited for you. Okay, my bookish moment this week is, honestly, it's hanging out virtually, with Elizabeth from Waco, from Fabled bookshop in Waco. She has, of course, been curating our Indie Press List for these last two months. And it's really, like, facilitated this relationship with her. And I feel like she's trying to single handedly stock my TBR at this point, like she is messaging me all the time. Kaytee, have you read this yet? You need to and she knows my tastes so well. But I'm like, Well, I have to listen to Elizabeth. She obviously knows what she's talking about. So it's just been like, it's it's been really great. And I got to help her narrow down from to the final choice for the May list, which of course will release at the beginning of May, 1st Thursday of the month, if you guys want to join us by then. And I it was just really fun to like, have my hands in that a little bit and get to help her make this decision. And she's just she's just a really great person. I love the way just like, you know that books can connect us to people that we wouldn't necessarily have met or known otherwise.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:15

Yeah, she's really great. And she's just extraordinarily good at hand selling books to our entire group of Bookish Friends and and really, to the individual to she's really freakishly good at that.

Kaytee Cobb 04:28

Really. All right, well, those were good bookish moments. Let's get into some current reads. What do you got?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:36

Alright, I have three really disparate books, but I'm glad to talk about each one of them. So the first one I want to talk about is called Snow and Rose by Emily Winfield Martin. This is middle grade, and it's a retelling of the Snow White and Rose Red fairy tale. So this is not the Snow White story. This is a completely different story. Okay, this is sort of an even older fairy tale. This book, first of all, I heard about it on What Should I Read Next, one of the guests was mentioning that it was a real comfort read for her. And so and she really recommended it in print. And so I got my library had a beautiful print copy. And first of all, I have to say, I am 100% recommending the print version of this book. I have no idea maybe it's great on audio, but the illustrations the cover and the illustrations within the book, really are when you match that with the story. That's really what I'm recommending here. Okay, so, the setup, I'm going to kind of take from the way that Amazon describes it because I think it does a really good job just kind of giving you a little hint what it's about. So it starts with "Once Snow and Rose lived in a big house with spectacular gardens and an army of servants. Once they had a father and a mother who loved them more than the sun in the moon, but that was before their father disappeared into the woods, and their mother disappeared into her sorrow. This is the story of two sisters, and the enchanted woods that had been waiting for them to break a set of terrible spells". This book is absolutely beautiful. It is, you know, again, I love a fairy tale retelling. So this is 100%. my happiest place. It has the sweetest full color illustrations, I found myself looking and looking at the same illustrations because not only are they really beautifully done, but each one has layers of almost like clues or hints to the story that keep kind of revealing themselves to you, the longer you look at them. I just found that it was a really nice addition to the story. It's a very classic retelling it, was very closely to the classic fairy tale of Snow White and Rose Red, which I went back and re read in its more original form, just to kind of cue my memory. And it was. So it was really perfect palate cleanser too, because I read this one, almost right on the heels of reading Good Neighbors, which we talked about on the last show. So I needed something that was the absolute opposite. And this is it. So I do have to say that I think it would be a wonderful read aloud, although maybe not for the very youngest kids because there are some slightly scary themes in it. So I do want to kind of put that out there page through it a little bit to decide if it's right for your kids. But for kids, my kids from like six ish to 10, it would have been a beautiful read aloud because each chapter is almost like a short story. They're definitely connected. And it's for sure a novel but each chapter has a really nice feeling of completeness that really lends itself I think to a one chapter a night kind of read aloud. And it's also something that I think you could enjoy easily as a comfort read slow but steady if you're going through kind of a maybe stressful time in your adult life. So I absolutely loved this one it was it was totally beautiful and absolutely sweet and charming. This is Snow and Rose by Emily Winfield Martin.

Kaytee Cobb 08:07

I love that. I have some picture books that are written and illustrated by her. But I did not know that she writes middle grade. So...

Meredith Monday Schwartz 08:15

Yeah, this is lovely.

Kaytee Cobb 08:16

All right. I'm going to switch some things around then. So we can have a little middle grade flight. And I'm going to talk about a book that's been mentioned before, but it's been almost a year. It's Echo by Pam Munoz Ryan.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 08:28

Oh, I'm so glad I love this so much!

Kaytee Cobb 08:30

Right. Meredith brought this as a current read in season two, Episode 39. So you got to go way back almost a full year and talked about how she was doing it as a slow but steady on her runs. That means that it's time that I get to talk about it now and I couldn't not talk about it because this book, this book is meant to be listened to right Meredith?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 08:35

You, in the same way that Snow and Rose is.... I'm recommending it in print, the same Yes, this is an audio pick for sure.

Kaytee Cobb 09:00

You have to listen to this one. There's multiple narrators narrating multiple storylines. But most importantly, there is music woven through the story. And it starts out each each section of the book and then it's woven in in between the chapters throughout a special moments in each chapter. You cannot get the same experience if you pick this one up on paper. We are following basically a harmonica right from Germany to Pennsylvania to California. We meet a number of young middle grade people who all have their lives shifted just the slightest bit by this harmonica, while the world around them shifts in really big ways. Each section, again, we're focusing on music so it might be Brahm's Lullaby, Auld Lang Syne, America the Beautiful. You'll hear the music, you'll hear the narrator bring that story to life. You'll love Friedrich, Mike and Ivy when they win us over with their storylines in each of those three stories. Plus the prologue, plus an epilogue that will just get you in the best way. You have to pick this one up readers. I know it's not a brand new read. It's not something you haven't heard about before. But if you've been waiting to pick it up for any reason, maybe this is the time you do it. It's gorgeous. It's incredible. I loved it so much. It's Echo by Pam Munoz Ryan.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:22

It's an absolute must listen. And I think it's really well timed that you're talking about this right now, Kaytee, because we have a lot of people that are asking us, they're saying we're getting ready to do a really long drive with our entire family. What do we listen to? This is a top recommendation because your whole family can listen to it. Everyone will be interested. And yes, you. I mean, I cried and was happy to be doing it. Because again, I don't mind crying in a book, if it is really organically, sort of incited in me. I'm not manipulated. This is just an extraordinary, extraordinary book. I love it.

Kaytee Cobb 11:01

It's so good. Pick it up, pick it up, everybody pick it up and come back and tell us you loved it. What's your second book Meredith?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 11:08

All right. So from the from the the extraordinary to the mundane at best. I'm going to talk about The Inheritance Games by Jennifer Lynn Barnes.

Kaytee Cobb 11:19

Oh, no, I think I just bought this today.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 11:22

Yeah. All right. Well, this is one of those books that has a tremendous premise. And I feel like those are the ones that I'm most likely to feel spicy about. Because if I get drawn in, I want it to be really, really good. So let me give you the setup. Here's this, Here's this great premise. I even love the cover. It's got a great cover, right? And on the cover, it says "She came from nothing. They have everything. Let the games begin". Right. It's like this great setup on the cover. That's perfect, right? Our lead character is Avery Grambs. She's a smart, driven high school student from the very, very wrong side of the tracks. And as our story starts, she's trying to create a better future for herself. She's got an eye on a scholarship she's working super hard for and she has an idea for a career that she wants. That will be satisfying to her and will change her destiny. But her fortunes change really quickly when billionaire Tobias Hawthorne dies, and leaves Avery virtually his entire fortune. Billions of dollars, like this is mammoth fortune. The catch: Avery has no idea why she's been chosen as the heiress. She doesn't even know who Tobias Hawthorne is. To receive her inheritance, Avery has to move into the sprawling family estate called Hawthorne House, which tip to toe Hawthorne House is a character in and of itself because it shows the old man's love of puzzles, riddles, and codes. Unfortunately for Avery, Hawthorne House is also occupied by the family, the very family that Tobias Hawthorne has just not left his fortune to, a fortune that they fully expected to receive. So she has to move into the house with these people.

Kaytee Cobb 13:13

This sounds terrible.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 13:15

This includes Alright, now here's where here's where we're going to begin to dig hard dive downward. This includes the four Hawthorne grandsons, who grew up with every expectation that one day they would inherit these billions, and each of the grandsons, all four of them are smart, and gorgeous, because of course, and each one thinks that they can solve the riddle and the problem that is Avery Grambs in his own way. All right. That's all jacket copy. I mean, it's not actual jacket copy. But like that, no spoilers there. Obviously. I really loved the first third of this book. I mean, I was just flipping the pages flipping the pages, I was totally into it. The whole setup for the main character of Avery and her sister, I feel like we were just beginning to explore their story and the ways that they had to adjust to this amazing life, which is just fascinating, right? How you go from being pretty darn poor, to going, you know, where you only take the subway to move into a place where now all of a sudden, you have a fleet of cars and a fleet of private planes. And you have paparazzi following you trying to figure out why you

were chosen to inherit these billions. But then once we got into the story, the interesting elements started to disappear. I wanted it to be I wanted it to sort of segue into the puzzle elements because there's a lot of things a lot of sort of puzzled kind of Westing Game kind of stuff that you're hoping for, but it devolves instead to this YA love triangle or whatever shape involves Avery and the four grandsons I don't know. Like a pentagon. Yeah, and Not well, maybe. And none of the grandsons none of them, not one of them was interesting or likable enough that you wanted that romance to actually happen. So the whole time you're sort of watching through your fingers, hoping that it

Kaytee Cobb 15:14

like The Bachelorette.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 15:15

Yes. So angsty it was there was all manner of angsty whining and manipulations amongst Avery and the boys. And again, I felt like this premise had so much potential to be that way, a version of Westing Game for the new millennium, right? Like, I felt like it had a ton of potential. But sadly, as Mary Heim, who is, you know, as I started to pick it up, she had read it and she fair warning to me like she definitely was like, Huh, read it. But you know, so she like, it's, it's not it's not a YA Westing Game. It just doesn't, it doesn't reach that height. And also it ends, I do have to say it ends on a fairly large cliffhanger. And the next book doesn't come out until September 7 of 2021. So, you know, I don't I didn't hate this book at all. I'm not upset about I'm not angry about it. It wasn't badly done. I just felt like there was so much potential that it didn't realize. And that always kind of just bums me out. So that's The Inheritance Games by Jennifer Lynn Barnes.

Kaytee Cobb 16:19

It sounds like a little bit of Ready Player One elements to it as well. Did you read that one?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 16:24

I did read that one. Ready Player One had more heft to it. Yeah. Yeah. It had more heft. And it had more interesting puzzle elements that were delivered upon that weren't that here. It just wasn't. Okay. And that just it was such a good premise. It had so much potential. Bummer.

Kaytee Cobb 16:46

What a bummer. All right, well, I brought my not perfect one for the middle as well. So here we go. We're going to go with Never Caught: The Washingtons' Relentless Pursuit of their Runaway Slave, Ona Judge by Erica Armstrong Dunbar. It's a long title. This book, I know you're going to be surprised. This book is a biography, which I did already talk about how I do not like biographies. But in general, the premise was really interesting. I had picked up a copy of this for middle graders at a local bookstore over a year ago, when there were bookstores open in my town owned by our bookish friend, Liberty Goldstein. I decided that in middle in March, when I was reading middle grade that I wanted to pick it up, but I can only find the adult version on audio. And audio is what's working for me right now. So I decided to listen to that I figured it was similar enough. We're following Ona Judge who was born into enslavement on the Washington plantation. Yes, that Washington, under an enslaved woman owned by Martha Washington. We learn about the way that the Washingtons interacted with their human property. And the way that lives changed around Mount Vernon when he became president of the brand new

United States. And that change was what allowed eventually Ona Judge to escape. For decades, the Washingtons relentlessly pursued as the title says her for for decades. I mean, she never got to just be a human, she had to always be watching over her shoulder. This, this book overall was really interesting and revealing. It's not long, but I have a quibble with it. And I think it's something that I would have a problem with in any biography, in that our author Dunbar has lots of historical information to work with, was really able to flesh out the story. But when there were things that we could not know, like how Ona Judge was feeling in a particular situation. She would write stuff like, we can assume that she was scared, or one would think that she was probably helpless, you know, like, so she would make assumptions and put in thoughts and feelings about what was happening behind the scenes in a situation where she could not have known if she's not like, letters from the time reflect that she felt so and so about this situation. And that really bugged me, I feel like if you're going to take on a biography, you have to stick with your source material, and you have to flesh it out that way, rather than inserting your own hypothesis about what is happening behind the scenes. So if you're a Hamilton junkie, which we are, and you want more about Washington, because he's the best in that play, because he is, then this is a really interesting look at his life outside of the presidency. It's not about you know, Meredith's love of the White House and Air Force One and all the things that happen within the presidency. This is back behind the scenes, especially during this really pivotal time in US history. But it will reveal his flaws, his shortcomings and Martha's as well. And it's as much about that as it is about Ona Judge and her life, especially post running away from their, from their plantation and their space in Washington DC. So I do recommend picking it up, just know that that is with a grain of salt. And I'm not going to say the whole title again. But the base title is Never Caught by Erica Armstrong Dunbar.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 20:26

Alright, my third book is back in my wheelhouse. And so we're in a happy, happy happy place here. So I'm talking today about Knots and Crosses by Ian Rankin. Now, this was one of the five choices in the very first month, March of the Indie Press List. And so this was one of the ones that Elizabeth from Fabled chose for our group. And I think she probably had you know, mystery. Well, she definitely had mystery lovers in mind. This is one of Elizabeth's, I think she says that this is her favorite mystery series ever. And this is the first time I had read Ian Rankin. So here's the setup. So this is the first book in the inspector John Rebus series and there are 23 books so far in the series. So if you like this, you're in for a real treat. As our story starts, we're in Edinburg, Scotland, where there have been a brutal abduction and murder of two young girls. And now a third girl is missing, presumably at the hands of the same suspect. Our lead character and the man on this case is Detective Sergeant John Rebus, a very satisfyingly flawed lead police investigator. He smokes and drinks too much. He eats terribly, he's gone through a difficult divorce, and he's having issues in his relationship with his young daughter, he's just a hot mess. And also, I should say, because this is something that bothers me, this is not a man who makes healthy decisions. So just be aware of that as you as you get to know him in this first book. And so then Detective Sergeant Rebus starts getting these cryptic messages which contain a piece of knotted string and match stick crosses, along with notes, taunting him with pieces of a puzzle that only he can solve. So I think the best word to describe this first book in the series is gritty. Now I've only read this one. So I don't know if that will apply overall, but this is definitely that very gritty, police procedural that I really like. I enjoyed it, I thought it was really well written. And it was well written enough that even though John Rebus is a fairly unlikable lead character, especially at the start, again, I'm sure there's going to be an evolution across the series in his character. That's something I know people have said

that they really like. But in this first book, he's a tough hang. And the first 50 pages of this book are definitely setting the scene and solidifying the characters. And you have to be okay with that for the rest of the book. And I think probably the rest of the series to really make sense. So right there at the beginning, you're doing kind of the mystery series equivalent of world building. And it really will pay off if you but know that when you're going in, you're going to need to read the first 50 pages, to really be into the story and to be into the characters. And so this one is really smart. And it's definitely for fans of gritty crime fiction. But again, as I just got done in last month, All Things Murderful, saying, you have to let books like this come to a boil, you're not going to jump in and be in the midst of a three page chapter, page turning kind of thriller situation. I don't think we should expect that from our books. And in fact, I think we'd benefit if that's not what we're getting. We're getting a story well told, over the course of a lot of books. And this book in and of itself as a standalone was really satisfying. The mystery was really smart. And after that, a little bit of a slow burn at the beginning, very well paced all the way through, and I did not see the resolution coming at all. In fact, I gasped out loud a couple of different times. I think if you really like the Cormoran Strike books, but maybe there's some elements now that you're uncomfortable continuing to read in that series, give a give a shot to this particular series. So this is Knots and Crosses by Ian Rankin.

Kaytee Cobb 24:24

Oh, I'm so glad you talked about that one. It's sitting on my shelf because Fabled got me too so. Yeah, this is a good one. All right. My third one is not in my wheelhouse. But it completely surprised me. So I'm going to talk about Landslide by Susan Conley. This was a direct recommendation from one of our favorite Bookish Friends Anne Altman and I really trust and so even though I read the description, and the very first sentence of the blurb is "a gorgeous jewel of a novel", I was like, okay, and I'm trusting you because that's like, that's like I

Meredith Monday Schwartz 25:02

don't like those words. Like those words

Kaytee Cobb 25:04

I don't like that yeah, I should be running away. Instead, our main character is Jill, her husband is a fisherman in Maine who's headed north to Canada to hopefully bring home a big haul of lobster because global warming has pushed the lobster crops up north from where they live. So, but he has an accident, it ends up, and ends up in the hospital. That means that Jill is caring for her two teenage boys alone. She calls them the wolves, which is just perfect for teenage boys, right? They're like, ravenous, and like stalking around the house eating everything in sight. Jill and the boys are in this tiny cottage in remote Maine buffeted by the weather, and she's doubting that she can hold it together. There's a storyline here where Jill begins to think that her marriage is unstable, and she can't trust her husband. And I know for some of our listeners, that is a big trigger. So you need to know that before you pick that up. But mostly, this is a story about family, about a mother and her sons trying to manage social media and sex and drugs. And what family looks like when it gets upended. Because dad is not around. To me, it felt like a glimpse into my future. I've got three boys and then my baby caboose girl, right? And it just I felt like this, this story of this woman with her teenage boys trying to be the best mom that she can trying to tow that line between, you know, doing everything she can to make their lives good while also letting them fly. It was so, I don't want to say poignant, but it felt like a glimpse forward for me. And I

think for a lot of readers, it's either going to be, wow, this novel is me right now. Or this novel was me 10 years ago, or this novel will be me in seven years, you know, and you'll just feel like, you can slide in to Jill's spot and you can feel and be everything that she is in this book. So this book is about nothing. And everything, which is what I told and when I finished it because it feels so perfect for exactly. This. Ah, this moment in my life. And for so many other readers. It is getting a little bit of us, but it's not really out there in the Zeitgeist and I would love to talk about it with more readers. It is *Landslide* by Susan Conley.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 27:29

Yeah, I've heard this one a couple of different places. And people have said no, normally I'm not into this kind of book. But this one really drew me in. So yeah, this is this is very interesting.

Kaytee Cobb 27:38

It was surprising. It was surprising how much I loved it. And it's not even it's not long. It's not like you have time to get really swept up into her story. You're just like, wow, I feel you. I'm here with you in this. It's really good. All right, well, those were our six current reads. So now we're going to deep dive about books about books and bookstores. And Meredith, you and I have the same experience here. We're trying to get ready for this deep dive. And we're like, oh, it's time to prep. Oh my gosh, I just word vomited. 800 books that I love to talk about?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:11

Yeah, I was thinking I would probably have a good solid four or five that I really wanted to talk about. But when I started dipping into my book journal, I realized, wow, there's a lot of books about books, libraries, bookstores, that I absolutely not just that I've read, but I've really, really loved. So I'm excited to talk about it today.

Kaytee Cobb 28:28

Me too. Me too. So I ended up doing kind of four broad categories. And letting that I was I was hoping that that was gonna like whittle me into a spot. But I still ended up with a completely excessive number of books. So the first one that I think you're going to have a lot of overlap with me on is books about books and bookstores that have a mystery element. So did you have any of those pop into your head Meredith?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:57

So yes, definitely, this is a favorite category. So a couple that immediately popped into my mind, of course, a book that I read not very many months ago, that was kind of under the radar. But now a lot of people are really discovering it, which is awesome, which is *Midnight at the Bright Ideas Bookstore*. This was one of those books that I thought was kind of a fun frothy book about a bookstore. And in fact, it's very much about a bookstore, but it is a really hard hard hitting mystery. One of the best mysteries I've read in a long time. So this is one that if you like that mystery element to it, but you want your setting to be in a bookstore, head to this one for sure. That's by Matthew Sullivan.

Kaytee Cobb 29:36

Nice. And the first one that I thought of for that category was *The Thirteenth Tale* by Diane Setterfield, which is very, like dark and gothic. But there's a book within a book happening here and an author that's trying to pull a story out of an older woman. It's just, it's delicious. I love it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 29:55

Yes, absolutely. That's that's one that I would actually love to reread. It's been so many years since I've read that book, but it is so very good. I'd actually like to do that one on audio this time. But then I also was thinking, so a book that I actually and I pressed it, but I have not read it fully because I set it aside saying, I know I want to enjoy it later. And yet it is a book that I own I read maybe 50 pages of but I think about it all the time is *Shadow of the Wind* by Carlos Ruiz Stefan, and I know that it's a it's a trilogy, right? There's there's three books in that. And then there's three books in the trilogy, *Shadow of the Wind* is the first one. Again, I haven't finished it all the way through because for whatever reason, I decided to set it down, but I knew I wanted to return to it. But the the story is so centered on you know, this, this bookstore and just the effect of this book that they're searching for. It's just an amazing book about books.

Kaytee Cobb 30:52

I love that. The one that I just finished yesterday, actually, while we were doing yard work, this is a galley. So this one's coming up really soon, is *The Good Sister* by Sally Hepworth who wrote *The Mother-In-Law*. Our main character works in a library. So all throughout this entire mystery, she is pressing books into readers hands, and I love that element of it. So it's like, this is not a book about books. But it's totally a book about books.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 31:17

I cannot wait for the new Sally Hepworth book. Not only did I love *The Mother-In-Law*, and that was one of my favorite mysteries last year, but also, are you guys following her on Instagram? She is hysterical. She's a delight. She is so good on Instagram. And now I am like the big even a bigger fan. So I cannot wait until this book comes out. I'm so excited about it. Well, so speaking of people that we're huge fans of and that we really, really adore, I think we have to talk about Ellery Adams' books here, right, which is *The Secret, Book and Scone Society* series of that entire series. If you're looking for a cozy mystery, and you want just something really well done and comforting and cozy with books and books stored at the center. Absolutely go with *The Secret, Book and Scone Society*. It's so so good. Okay,

Kaytee Cobb 32:13

I've got one more for this category, too. And it's one of the first ones that I read that would fit in like bookish mystery. It's *Mr. Penumbra's 24 Hour Bookstore* by Robin Sloan, which is this creepy old bookstore that's so big and dark and dusty. And there's the big mystery at the beginning at this at the center of this book. And it was I mean, it's Robin Sloan's first book, but then has written fantastic one since. So that one's a great one to pick up also.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 32:39

That's one that I need to do. I'm going to revisit just super quickly the cozy category because another another book about a series about a bookstore that I really love. The first book is called *Crime and*

Poetry by Amanda Flower. And this is actually part of the Magical Bookshop series. And in this series books like pop themselves off the shelves and like knock someone upside the head because they that book is meant to be taken home by that particular reader. So and it's got this magical tree that grows up in the center of the bookstore. I love that series. This is a really good one,

Kaytee Cobb 33:12

That's fun. I feel like cozy mysteries will transition as well to my next category, which is fluff and froth. And I think that the first one in this category has to be Bookshop on the Corner by Jenny Colgan. Yep, it's so fun. This one is so delightful even though it's a misnomer. It's a bookshop in a van. It is poorly titled.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 33:33

It's poorly titled.

Kaytee Cobb 33:35

But the entire story is delightful. And it's very fluffy and frothy and Scottish and lovely.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 33:41

Well, and so yes, absolutely. That has to be on this list. And if you want a book that, in my opinion is actually a couple of notches better, but does all the same work. How to Find Love in a Bookshop by Veronica Henry is such a sweet confection of a book and it hits all those same notes, but I think it's just a little bit better written.

Kaytee Cobb 34:03

That's a that's a little bit of a spicy opinion, but I like it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:06

I like both of I like both those books. To be fair, I like both of them, but

Kaytee Cobb 34:10

Fair. My next one in this category is The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Society by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows, which is a World War Two book. It is epistolary, but oh, the book references in this one and the way that books get worked into the story are just fantastic. I love it. So a couple more little fluffy ones that I just have to put on this list is The Uncommon Reader by Alan Bennett which is just a short little novella. Queen finds a book man, like falls in love with reading; love that one. And then Parnassus on Wheels, which is like an kind of autumn of your life story, sell your house, buy a book van and start traveling the country. Oh, I love that one. And then even though it toes the line between fluff and not fluff, I'm also going to put The Midnight Library by Matt Haig on this one because it it is super bookish and all four of the currently reading hosts loved that one. So I had to get it on this list too.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 35:07

I'm so glad we're we're on the same page here literally and figuratively because I, I absolutely think that that it's it's hard to categorize The Midnight Library. But it definitely belongs on this list because it

scratches that itch of fantastic book that also kind of has that bookish hook in it. Yes. Alright, so I'm gonna give you a few more books that are a little are kind of going harkening back to that mystery elements. But some, you know, some of them not not cozy, this is a little if you want something a little darker, with a little more texture in it, but you also want to be in the book world. So I really want to recommend *The Historian* by Elizabeth Kostova. This is a book about ancient books that have some very interesting powers and also very sassy Dracula. So really, this is an this is one, *The Historian* is very, very good on audio. I also a book that I just think is amazing and doesn't get enough play is *The Unlikely Escape of Uriah Heep* by H.G Parry. This one I think is really I mean, again, for me, this is one that I would read in fall or winter. So if you make lists like that, you might want to put it you might want to slot it there. But this is a book where characters from Dickens novels come to life. And it's got a rollicking mystery, fantastic lead character. I loved that book. It's very, very bookish, especially if you have a degree in English, get you that book right now because you will really, really love it. And then so a couple of the books, I have to talk about *Magpie Murders* and *Moonflower Murders* by Anthony Horowitz. if you like the concept of a book within a book, those two books do that really, really well. And then also *Eight Perfect Murders*. This is a mystery. This is a mystery that that basically says there's a killer that is recreating murders from eight novels, and kind of doing them in real life. So it harkens back to those really classic mystery novels and it's got that serial killer element to it. So that's great. From a kind of YA perspective, or almost fairy tale ish fantasy perspective, I want to talk about *The Hazel Wood* by Melissa Albert, which is a you know, a centers on a book of murderous fairytales, which is very interesting. And then also, I really love *Inkheart*, by Cornelia Funke, very much in the book world, but also in the fantasy realm. That's more middle grade than YA, but really great. *The Inkheart's* the first book, and it's a series, so it's really wonderful. And then I think we just have to cap it off with *Dear Fahrenheit 451* by Annie Spence, which is not mystery. This is in a category of its own, because it's really just a love letter to books. And so you get it, Annie Spence goes through and sort of talks about all the things that she loved about many, many, many books that she's read. So for books, you know, for real readers. It's just a wonderful book about books that'll kind of make you hug it at the end. So I like that one on this list.

Kaytee Cobb 38:12

I agree about that. I'm going to talk a little bit about *Booked* by Kwame Alexander, which is a verse novel written by an own voices author books everywhere in this one *Book Scavenger* by Jennifer Chambliss Bertman. You have to pick this one up if you have a kid that loves geocaching, or, you know figuring out puzzles or any like just delightful love that one

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:36

Well if you were if you were disappointed by *The Inheritance Games*, *Book Scavenger* is what you should pick up.

Kaytee Cobb 38:43

Definitely. *Matilda* by Roald Dahl. It's a classic for a reason. *Matilda* loves books, you have to pick that one up. And then even though I haven't read this one, I'm going to press, like not press but Erica Keckley, one of our bookish friends has pressed into our hands *The Land of Stories* series by Chris Colfer, which is very much book characters coming to life coming out of the books, stories coming to life. So I'm excited about that one as well.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:08

That is a great list. Those are, I mean, some of my favorite books I've ever read. I mean, that's a really strong list.

Kaytee Cobb 39:15

I know.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:16

Yeah, that's a good that's like that the hand that list to a reader and they're gonna have a really good time with it.

Kaytee Cobb 39:22

Yeah, I might, I might put some bonus ones in the show notes too, guys, just in case you guys need some more to this one, because we're getting a little long on time. But there's lots more bugs from this category. So let's talk about books we want to press.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:34

Absolutely. Okay. And as we often do, Kaytee you might be doing this too, I am going to be I've saved one of the books from my deep dive to be the book that I want to press. So I want to press one of my favorite middle grade books of all time. And it's a series so again, we've been talking about lots of books if you like this, there's more where that came from, which is awesome. It's Pages and Co. The Book Wanderers is the first one by Anna James Oh, this book is such a delight. So and at one point it's from the UK at one point it was really weirdly hard to get hold of, but now it's fully come to the US and so now you can get you can get copies of it and the cop the the way these books are put together are very beautiful. So here's the setup. Tilly, our lead character who is just a doll she is being raised by her grandparents in the UK, who run a gorgeous, old, slightly magical bookshop. Gah, what a dream This is my dream childhood, right her grandparents are really great people. But then suddenly, Tilly start seeing characters from her favorite stories appear in real life, but only in the bookshop. Your there is bookish adventure around every corner. And there's some bad guys too. But this book is just so much fun. This is just sweet. It's magical, it's bookish, it dips into plenty of well known stories, which is really, really fun. And there's enough complexity in the rules of book wandering, to keep even an adult interested. So it was one of those where it's definitely smart enough for an adult to read it and really enjoy it. And I actually made a list as I was reading that book of several children's classics that I had not at that point read and I've since put some time into reading them. So it was really helpful to kind of balance out my classic children's literature reading. So this is Pages and Co. The Book Wanderers by Anna James.

Kaytee Cobb 41:36

It's such a good one. Meredith is the one that got me to pick that one up. And you guys it's worth it. It's a it's a really fun story. For me, I couldn't not press The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry today by Gabrielle Zevin. I'm shocked that I have not pressed this before. It was published in 2014. And I would call this an early comer to the beloved curmudgeon genre, which is one of my very favorites, as you all know. Even better, our curmudgeon is a bookseller in a bookstore. Poor A.J., his wife has died. His bookstore is

struggling, and his rare collection of Edgar Allan Poe poems has been stolen. He lives in this tiny community called Ellis Island, because of course he does. And he has this this story that's about found family that will just wrap you up in all kinds of warm fuzzies. It is a wonderful collection of characters, a little bit of mystery, and a whole lot of heart in the story. I loved it when I read it in 2016. And I hope that all the book lovers out there if you haven't read it, that you'll pick it up now. It's so good. It's so good. It's The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry by Gabrielle Zevin.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 42:47

This is one that has been on my shelves forever, and it just hasn't come to the top of my TBR. But so many people love it. So this is one that I really need to read.

Kaytee Cobb 42:55

It's very, it's very curmudgeonly, A.J. is just just down at the beginning, and you just love him. You just want his life to be better. I love him.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:06

But I love that trope when things are really bad at the start of a book, and then they get better, you know, because I don't like it when things are really good at the start of a book and they get that I don't Yeah, I don't like that. Let's just start at the bottom and move on up through our story. So all right, well, that is it for this week. As reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me, I'm Meredith at @meredith.reads on Instagram.

Kaytee Cobb 43:28

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:32

Full show notes with the title of every book we mentioned in the episode and timestamps so you can zoom to right where we talked about it can be found on our website at currentlyreadingpodcast.com

Kaytee Cobb 43:42

You can also find us on Instagram at @currentlyreadingpodcast or email us at currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:50

And if you really want to help us become a Patron. Become a bookish friend. It's just \$5 a month and you get a ton of additional content. You can also help us by rating and reviewing us on Apple podcasts, and even more so shout us out on social media. That makes a huge difference for us finding our perfect audience.

Kaytee Cobb 44:09

Your recommendations, your shares, and especially your Patreon support are helping us grow and get closer to our goals. Thanks for doing that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:16

All right, until next week. Happy reading Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 44:18

Happy reading Meredith.