



Season 3, Episode 19: 2020 Strikes Again - Revisiting a Classic Episode

Monday, 12/7/2020 • 44:50

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 know, we won't shy away from having strong opinions. So get ready. I'm Meredith Monday, Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas. And you guys, I'm here on my own today, because 2020 has struck again, we are ready to see the back of you, 2020. I'm here on my own today, because as you may have heard, Kaytee's entire family, including Kaytee, have COVID. They are going to be okay, thankfully, but they're all feeling pretty awful. So we thought we'd take advantage of today and offer up something that lots of you guys have been asking for. But before we get there, let's handle some book business. It's the first episode of the month. And so we want to make sure that you guys are reminded of the fantastic Book of the Month. If you're looking for an amazing gift option for the readers in your life, Book of the Month is a great choice.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:16

Totally, honestly, I bought a six month subscription for my mom last year, and it totally restarted our relationship in a new way. We could chat together about what our choices were going to be every month. And then once we got them, we often had gotten similar books. And so we were able to have those books in common and have those conversations around those books. And it helped us get through a bit of a bumpy patch in our relationship. And it's been really, really good. Books are great that they do that for us, aren't they? So remember how Book of the Month works every month, they offer five books as your choices for that month. They span all sorts of genres, and they have some really huge name authors, but lots of debut authors too. A lot of times they also will have big books by big name authors, and they'll be available at book of the month before they're available anywhere else.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 02:05

If you have a month where you don't love any of the choices, you can just skip that month and your credit will roll over. And you can also add up to two books to your box every month, which I do more often than I'd like to admit. This month I'm choosing *People Like Her* by Ellery Lloyd. This is a debut suspense novel about a mommy influencer on Instagram, whose perfect life starts to veer horribly off course. And that's before the stalker fan comes into the picture. It sounds so good. Kaytee let me know that she's going to be getting *This Close to Okay*, by Lisa Cross-Smith, she feels like it's what she wanted but didn't get from *Anxious People*.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 02:46

If you want to become a Book of the Month member, or buy a gift subscription, use the code `currentlyreading` and get your first book for just \$9.99. And word to the wise they have some really extra

special deals going on right now for their gift subscriptions. So now is a great time to jump in. Okay, business managed. Now, as I mentioned, Kaytee is really feeling punk today. So we decided that we would use this as a chance to do something that we've never done before. We're going to offer you a Currently Reading classic episode, we're going to let you listen again to Episode One of the Currently Reading Podcast. It's not available any longer on Apple podcasts because for reasons no one understands they limit how many episodes are available at any one time. And lots and lots of you are new to us and you didn't get a chance to listen to this first episodes. As an aside, I will let you know that I hear that Spotify and Overcast don't have those same limits. So if you're wanting to listen to the first 28 ish episodes, you can do that on those platforms.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:49

Okay, here's a little inside baseball on this episode that you're going to hear today. We recorded this on August 16, 2018. That was just six weeks from the day that Katie and I decided to do a podcast. Literally six weeks from the day we had the idea. I asked her if she would join me and then actually started the show. We moved fast from the idea stage to the execution stage. This episode was in fact, the very first time that we took this format out on a ride and we weren't positive that it was going to work. We hoped it would but we weren't positive. But it did. And we've been having a blast ever since. Now, when I listened to this episode, I cringe a little bit because there's no question that the audio quality and the editing are not nearly as good as our show is now. But the reality is, neither one of us had ever done anything like this before. And we were totally new. We were figuring it out on the way and I'm so glad that we decided to just do it and figure it out rather than waiting until we got perfect because very frankly, we'd still be waiting. Do notice that Kaytee sounds great from the very start, totally comfortable and totally herself from the very beginning. I, on the other hand, sound like a crazed newscaster hopped up on Red Bull and raw fear. So that's fun. I do calm down eventually. But the beginning is painful for me to listen to, it might be painful for you, too. So thank you guys for being patient with us while we let Kaytee heal a bit, and we hope so much that you all are staying safe and healthy, too. Until we're together again, we hope that you enjoy this trip in the Wayback Machine of the very first episode of the Currently Reading Podcast.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 05:42

Thank you for joining us for Episode One of the Currently Reading Podcast. I'm Meredith Monday Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in the San Francisco Bay Area, who's basically been wanting to be left alone with the book since age four.

Kaytee Cobb 05:58

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, i homeschool my four little ones. We live in New Mexico, and I read to maintain my sanity with all those kids running around.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:08

I do not blame you. I do that. That is exactly the reason that I wouldn't be reading if I were you, Kaytee. Okay, so I am so excited that we're doing this. I know, this is something we've wanted to do for a really long time because we love to talk books with each other.

Kaytee Cobb 06:25

We do. It's so serendipitous that we got to find bookish best friends online. So I know,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:30

I know, even though we've never met in real life, I feel like I've known you forever because we share so many favorite books.

Kaytee Cobb 06:36

So true. My child is actually asking me today, if I was ever going to get to meet my book best friend that I'm recording with.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:43

I think that would be totally fun. And you know, we are going to need to make that happen. We'll make it happen. Okay, so let's get started the way that we love to, which is to talk about our bookish moment of the week. And this is kind of a book win, a reading win, something we absolutely loved in our reading life. And for me, today is my son's seventh birthday. And I have been waiting for his seventh birthday since I was pregnant with him because I knew that when he turned seven, I was going to start reading the Harry Potter books with him.

Kaytee Cobb 07:22

That's such an exciting milestone.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:24

It really is. I have been looking forward to this forever. And so we are going to start the very first book, obviously tonight. So that's my that's my bookish moment of this week.

Kaytee Cobb 07:36

Now, do you guys have the illustrated edition?,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:39

We have an edition that's illustrated. But we don't have the 20th anniversary edition, which is really beautiful. So I was telling Jackson that I might very well splurge on that August is both of our birthday month. So I thought I might splurge and get those really beautiful versions. But we'll just start with the old school, scholastic the version that I actually read the first time through I these are the books that I read.

Kaytee Cobb 08:06

That's awesome. I'm so excited for you guys. To get to do that together.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 08:10

I hope he likes it as much as I do. There's an element of what if he doesn't love it? What will that mean?

Kaytee Cobb 08:16

I think it would be really difficult for him to not at least feel your love for it and get that translated into his reading life.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 08:24

If at the very least he will feel very pressured to like it.

Kaytee Cobb 08:29

no pressure, honey, but I might disown you if you don't love this book.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 08:32

Exactly. It might fundamentally change our relationship. Okay, what about you What's your bookish moment of the week.

Kaytee Cobb 08:39

So I just had my fourth kiddo at the beginning of July. But I'm excited to say that this week, I finished my 150th book for the year. So I'm three quarters of the way to my goal for the year. And we're only two thirds of the way through the year. So I'm feeling good about actually hitting my goal this year, which is really exciting.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:00

If having a newborn does not knock you off of your trajectory, I think you are pretty much gonna make your goal that is amazing.

Kaytee Cobb 09:09

I think we're gonna make it

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:11

That is completely amazing. And I know one of the things that we're going to be talking about over the course of the podcast is something that we get asked all the time that you get asked all the time. How do you make so much time for reading? How do you get so much reading done? And I know that that's one thing that we're gonna be discussing as we as we go on in the podcast. But speaking of reading, what are you currently reading? What have you been reading really in the last week or so what what books have risen to the top of your list from your last week of reading?

Kaytee Cobb 09:44

So I finished six books this past week since one week ago, today. And one of them actually I have I have two that I rated five stars and I'm super excited to talk about One is being released soon it's from our mutual friend Jessica Turner, she is releasing her next book, which is called Stretched Too Thin.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:07

I cannot wait, I cannot wait for this book is going to be so good. And the buzz is so good about it.

Kaytee Cobb 10:13

And the buzz is so good because it is so good. So I was super excited to get chosen for Jessica's launch team. And one of the things that she realizes is that this book is geared towards working moms and working moms don't necessarily have time to pick up a book. So as part of the launch team, and as part of the pre-order bonus, everybody gets the audio version of the book if they preorder the hardcopy book as well. So I got to listen to it and I binge-listened to it in one day, because everything is just so on point. So I'm really excited to get this book into other working moms hands because it talks about like the guilt, it talks about managing your marriage at the same time that you manage your work life and your motherhood life. And it just touches on all these little pain points for working moms and, and really helps you figure out ways to work around it and to pursue what you love. And I just think she did a wonderful job putting it together. So that was definitely one of my wins this week.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 11:13

I am looking forward to that book. I am a working mom myself. And I am always looking for ways to make my life richer in both arenas and also really helps to feel like you're not alone in the things that you feel you're struggling with. So I'm gonna I'm gonna, I've pre ordered that I can't wait. When did you say that? It comes out? Do you know?

Kaytee Cobb 11:36

Yeah, Jessica's book releases on September 18. And like I said, you just want to grab it right now. So you get all those awesome bonuses.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 11:44

Right? I've got my pre order, and I'm excited about it. Okay, so I have a five star book that I read in the last week. I finished it in the last week. And it's not going to surprise anybody because I think everyone who I know who's read it puts it up there in their favorites of all time. But I finally at 45 years old, being a reader all my life, finally read Anne of Green Gables.

Kaytee Cobb 12:11

Oh, Anne.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 12:13

Exactly. And that's exactly what I felt like saying the whole time. And all I could think about was how much she is an enneagram type Four, the whole book, The enneagram kept coming up for me over and over again because she is a quintessential type four. And I just bless her little heart. And it was such a great story. And I know now exactly why people rave about it. I'll be honest with you, I hadn't read it till now because I felt like it was a little twee, it was a little

Kaytee Cobb 12:47

right. too saccharin.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 12:49

Kind of precious. And I don't have a lot of patience, I really need to have likable characters, that's something in my reading that I must have. I have to have characters that I can root for. They can be

very flawed, but I have to build root for them. And they can't be dumb. And if and also, if they're overly sweet, or likeable, or precious, that's gonna turn me off almost as much. And that

Kaytee Cobb 13:21

So you have like a reading sweetspot for your main characters.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 13:25

I do luckily it's fairly wide. But it is completely possible to be both on the high side and the low side of my sweet spot. But this book I have to say and I love middle grade fiction. That's something that will come up a lot when we talk about books. I'm almost always reading a middle grade kind of you know, fiction novel. I think that's kind of my comfort reading. Yeah, and when I'm very busy or overwhelmed, that's often what I will pull off the shelf. And so this book obviously in the entire series is incredibly famous and an absolute classic for a really good reason. What a fantastic amount of characters. What a beautiful setting it made me just want to go to Prince Edward Island immediately.

Kaytee Cobb 14:09

Right.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 14:10

So complete five star book, I was really happy that I got over myself and read Anne of Green Gables. Alright, what's your next what's your next book that you love from the week?

Kaytee Cobb 14:19

Well, I think that transfers perfectly well into my next pick, which was a reread for me but it was The Blue Castle, which is another classic by LM Montgomery. And I had read it a couple years ago for a book club and I picked it up again this summer. It is unusual for me to reread a book but my...

Meredith Monday Schwartz 14:42

I was gonna ask Are you a big reader? Do you do that very often?

Kaytee Cobb 14:45

No, I do not. Because even reading 200 ish books a year. It's hard to read everything that you want to read. So to me, it's kind of like I checked that box and I'm good to leave that off to the side. So but I did re read the Blue Castle this week partly because my summer reading challenge had a category that I was supposed to read a book with red, white or blue in the title. Okay, and so I did a quick search on my Kindle and through my hardcopy shelves, and that was the one that came up that I was most excited to get back into, because it has been probably four or five years since I read it the first time. And I just, I loved it. I love Doss, Valancy. I love the way that she just comes into her own after being kind of marginalized by her family as an old maid at 29 years old. And she's just she's just fantastic. And it's not a long book, but it's worth diving into.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 15:43

I loved that book too. And before I read Anne of Green Gables finally, that was the only element gamry I had ever read. And I read it probably about four or five years ago. And I absolutely loved it. I

mentioned to you, I love the Valancy character because I am a hardcore hypochondriac. And the transformation of that character, where she realizes she's so much physically and mentally stronger than she had all her life considered herself to be. I just found it really redemptive. There's such a redemptive quality to that story. And it's almost like an adult fairy tale. But it's not a fairy tale. There's no fantasy elements, but it's kind of it's so it's got a sweetness to it that I associate with kind of like a sweet comfort element that I associate with fairy tales.

Kaytee Cobb 16:35

I think that's because Valancy spends so much time living her own fairy tale in her head trying to escape her real world circumstances. And then she gets to finally escape it in real life. And it's just so it's like a fairy tale that comes to life for her, which I love.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 16:52

And isn't it interesting that both Anne and Valancy had such incredible interior lives. They were really living in such an interior way

Kaytee Cobb 17:03

That makes you wonder what LM Montgomery was doing with her with her interior fantasies. I mean, she has to have she has to have many, like interior monologues going on to produce these wonderful classics in the first place.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:20

Exactly. Like how much is she Anne? That's an interesting question.

Kaytee Cobb 17:24

Right.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:25

So my next win of the week was a book of short stories, which I actually don't read short fiction. As much as I almost feel like I should I have my degree in English. I feel like I read a lot of short fiction when I was getting my degree and right as an adult. It's just not something I normally pull off my shelf. But I read. You Think It, I'll Say It by Curtis Sittenfeld. Have you read this one?

Kaytee Cobb 17:53

I actually finished that two weeks ago.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:58

right. So we were kind of reading at the same time, I really liked this collection. And I think the way that I described it was, it seems to me that it was like the best first 10 to 20 pages of a novel like that piece that I'm almost always like, Oh, this is so good. I'm so interested. And then right when other books maybe take a little bit of a dip in interest, the story was over and you were moving on to a different one. So it's a it's a book of short stories that are very much set in the modern world. It felt to me very much steeped in social commentary about the different things that we deal with in the modern world in relationships that are taking place in the modern world. Cell phones figure very prominently in the

stories and text messages and those kinds of things. So I have never read Curtis Sittenfeld before, but I might pick up one of her novels at this point because I really liked the writing style. I found it very accessible, and I sped through the stories.

Kaytee Cobb 19:06

See and I had a total opposite experience.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 19:09

Did you?

Kaytee Cobb 19:10

I do like Curtis Sittenfeld. I have read one other of hers I liked Eligible, which was a reworking of Pride and Prejudice. And I had heard so many people talking about this book of short stories, and I am also not a short story aficionado. But I did decide to pick it up from the library after Laura Tremaine mentioned it on her podcast. And I think it's mostly that I'm such a plot driven reader. That's one of my characteristics. That's how I get really into a story that I kind of had the opposite experience in that you like those first 20 pages of build up, and then things start to lull for you. And that's when I would abandon a book if it starts to lull. And so that first 20 pages I want to dive in further and I want to get going on the story. And then it was over. So it's not necessarily that I don't like the way that she wrote. It's just that short stories for me are not my cup of tea as you will.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 20:12

Right. So you you wanted to go deeper. So you like the stories enough that you were thinking I wouldn't mind there being more of this.

Kaytee Cobb 20:19

Right. Right, absolutely.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 20:21

Sort of left you unsatisfied. Okay. All right. Well, we will happily agree to disagree on that on that particular particular one. Okay. So what was your next one?

Kaytee Cobb 20:32

All right, I got one more to talk about today. And it is a book from 2016. It's called Good Morning, Midnight by Lily Brooks-Dalton. And it's a post apocalyptic end of the world type book. And I had heard it mentioned a couple times by some other readers that I trust. So I decided to pick it up. And that one I listened to on audio. And I could not read it fast enough. It follows two storylines. One is a man that lives in the Arctic, and he's doing some research. And eventually everybody goes offline, he can no longer hear anybody on the radio, and he's not sure what happened. And he's in the Arctic, so he can't get to anybody. He can't hear from anybody. He's kind of all alone. And then the other storyline that it follows is a group of astronauts, but mainly one, on a return trip from a mission to visit the Jupiter moons. So they've been in communication with NASA this entire time, they come around the moons, they're on their way home, and they lose communication, and they can't get a hold of Mission Control. And they have no idea what happened on earth. And so it's just juxtaposing these two really extreme

circumstances where these people just have no idea what's going on. And the way that she develops this story. Brooks-Dalton, the author, she just really gets into, what would that be like to just all of a sudden, have no contact with anyone, and you have no idea what happened? So I just found it really compelling. And like I said, I'm plot-driven. So...

Meredith Monday Schwartz 22:11

And did it have a satisfying ending? Because what I find with books like that, what makes me worry is that I will be so wanting to know, the resolution, do they get back in contact? Do they get back to Earth that I can almost, I guess I'm impatient with books like that, that I almost have to go back, I have to go and read what happens and then double back in it and actually go along for the ride. So does it have a satisfy? Obviously, we won't talk about the ending, but were you satisfied at the end?

Kaytee Cobb 22:43

Well, the ending is hard to talk about with no spoilers. But there is no reason after the end, the book is over to go back and reread and say does everything fit in with the way that she wrapped up the book? I guess that's as far as I can go without spoiling any part of the ending.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 23:02

Okay, and because we know that you gave this five stars, you certainly were happy with your reading experience with it. Now, that's one that I, I posted last night that I did what I call a book flight, which I do, probably at least once a week, go to the library get a huge pile of library books. 15 or more, always have holds a con, you know, a constant, rotating set of holds. And so I'll get 12 or 15 books a week, which I'm not going to read all of and then I will spend an hour or last night actually spent an hour and a half going through and reading the first chapter or two ish of each book and just kind of putting them in piles, something that I just know immediately. Just not interested enough to proceed further. A pile of I definitely want to read these and then usually one or two, that's like, yeah, these are my next two. And that one was in my middle pile.

Kaytee Cobb 23:58

Right. Okay,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 23:59

but your your experience with it is making me want to pick it up. And my, my next pick my last pick for today, of what I've read really recently, is also post apocalyptic. And it is a book called The Book of M by Peng Shepherd. And The Book of M, just the letter M. I have big thoughts about this book. And so often, when I finish a book, it falls into one of two categories. I liked it, or Okay.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 24:41

What's next? It needed more of an editor. I don't have strong feelings. I kind of you know, just meh. But this was a book that did not fall into either one of those categories. No, I will tell you that it got passed. I'm so often read the first 50 pages of a book. I'll be totally into it, I'll post on Instagram how I'm positive, this book has just sucked me in. And then in the middle of the book, I just, I don't know what happens, I often don't DNF I'll finish, you know, many of those books, I have no problem DNFin a book, but many times I will finish a book, but just kind of arrive at the end a little bit, let down. And in this case, it is a

very, very strong, first half in that it is a story of kind of a sickness hits the world, the world, you know, being sort of like modern times. In India, a man loses his shadow.

Kaytee Cobb 24:41

What's next?

Kaytee Cobb 25:47

Okay.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 25:48

And then, just a couple days after losing his shadow, he begins to lose his memory. And it really tracks a lot like Alzheimers, but much faster. And that's the sickness, that's the illness that then begins to spread throughout the entire world and takes out most of civilization. Because the people who become shadowless, which is what they're called, they can't function at all within just a couple of days. And at some point, they'll walk off cliffs, they'll forget to eat, they'll forget to breathe eventually. So it's it is in fact, like a fatal illness that happens. And this isn't a spoiler, this is literally on the jacket cover. And what I love about this book, I love several things about this book, it's got a very strong hook, it's got multiple characters, you can absolutely root for very well drawn characters that you care about a lot. Their motivations make sense, all of that good stuff. The other thing I love about this book is what I am always wanting in my post apocalyptic fiction that I just feel like I can't get enough of, which is this book spends a lot of time satisfyingly giving you a picture of what the world was, like, as it came into knowledge that this sickness this this, with this, this thing was spreading. So there's a lot of you have a sense of how the order in which things were affected the order in which the military was being called in and the cities were falling, and what scientists were trying to do to figure this out, and it's very satisfying in that way, I always want more of that, like, from my Walking Dead, kind of like, but what was it like in Chicago when zombies started coming, you know, and there's no way in this book, by the way, I want to be very clear, there's no zombies. So that I really, really love about it. So I was cruising along, and I was all about this book. And then I hit that, roughly, I'm gonna say, two thirds point. And I just felt like, without giving any spoilers, I did read to the end, and I was interested to read all the way to the end. But I felt like the last third was willfully overly complicated. And it didn't need to be to have a satisfying ending that drove home the points that I think this author was trying to drive home. And if I'm not mistaken, this is Peng Shepard's first book. But the last third was just overly complicated and repetitive with scene after scene that I just didn't feel needed to be there. So by the time I got to the end of it, I was I very much was like, Oh, this book could have been so good. And in a lot of ways, it was really good. And there gonna be a lot of readers. If you like, post-apocalyptic books with great characters that you can root for. I would definitely say to pick it up. So I do recommend it. But I definitely felt like there were things that if I had edited it, I would have respectfully suggested that the author

Kaytee Cobb 29:15

change,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 29:16

Right. But it has a good ending.

Kaytee Cobb 29:20

Nice. Yeah. Sounds interesting. So I wrote the title down as you were talking, and then, you know, to put on my never ending TBR list that we all have sitting on Goodreads or wherever we keep our TBR list. And now I'm not sure if I'm gonna cross it out or not. So I have to evaluate. Do a little personal introspection on this one,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 29:42

And if you asked me, would I recommend it if it's got some things about it that are really interesting, and I have to say, I have been thinking about it a lot since I finished it. It has some very evocative scenes. It's got some kind of magical realism, not magical, but like it's got some, it's magical realism would be a way to describe some very memorable scenes of things happening, that don't normally happen in the real world. But in the, in the arc of the story, it was happening within their real world. So it was interesting and memorable. I don't know what I don't know if I would 100% say that you should pick it up just because of that last third. That I really that I really struggled with. But it's very interesting book. And again, if you if you really get into the details of like, what would it be like to live through an apocalypse? This gives you kind of all that good stuff. I mean, right. Not like That's good stuff. But I guess we're, clearly we're interested in

Kaytee Cobb 30:47

All that horrible stuff that's also awesome

Meredith Monday Schwartz 30:49

That we hope we don't have to experience

Kaytee Cobb 30:51

That we never want to see in real life.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 30:53

Exactly, exactly. Okay. So do you have a sense at all of what is up next for you? Do you know what next couple of books you'll read?

Kaytee Cobb 31:04

So I already mentioned my summer reading challenge. And I have five titles left to finish on that challenge for the summer. And so I'm trying to knock those out before the end of this month. One of them I'm reading right now on my Kindle. And so those other titles are the are the last ones that I need to finish up. So I have a few days left on my serial reader app to finish up War and Peace, which is a 235 day slog through Tolstoy's classic. And I feel so excited when it says I'm 94% done with this book. I'm working on it for eight months. And it's just really exciting. So that one's almost done. I'm reading another one that sounds really similar to what you were just talking about Blindness by Jose Saramago. And it was originally written in Spanish. So it's translated fiction, which means I could put it in another category as well. But it's, it's very interesting. I'll probably finish that one today. I've got a couple more kind of smaller books. And then the one I'm most excited about that's on my immediate like, the next time I finish a paper book I'm picking this one up is These is My Words, which has been on my list for a long time. And so I'm excited that it fits into my summer reading challenge. And I can get it knocked out

before the end of this month because I it takes place in Arizona. I grew up there. And it just feels like it has that epistolary novel as well where it's written in letters, and it feels like it's going to be something I really love. So I'm hoping that next week, I'll get to report back that it was a great read for me.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 32:40

That it was satisfying. And as far as reading challenges, they you like doing them?

Kaytee Cobb 32:47

Well, this one was kind of picked up on a whim, Goodreads put out a summer reading challenge. And it had two levels, the beginner level and the expert level. And as everyone may have guessed by now, I went for the expert level. So it's 40 titles over the course of the three months of the summer. And it's been fun to check in with one of my other online friends Morgan about our progress, and what should we put for this category? And did you finish that one yet? Should I put it there? Should I pick up something else? So it's been it's been fun. But usually, my one reading challenge is just the number of books I want to complete in a year. So right, this is a new thing for me.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 33:25

That's your goal. What I love the idea of reading challenges, but I have this really weird thing in my personality, and I don't find it in much else about my personality. And if someone tells me or if for some reason, I have a reading challenge or even a book club, I don't do book clubs in real life.

Kaytee Cobb 33:47

I don't do book clubs either

Meredith Monday Schwartz 33:49

Right, as soon as someone says, Okay, this is the book that you have to read you You must read this book, by this time, or any sort of box is put around my reading, all of a sudden, a level of rebelliousness comes out in me, that is not a hallmark of my normal personality. All of a sudden, I'm like, Oh, I'm supposed to buddy read whatever that is. Well, now it's the last book on the planet I want to read. And I really don't know what that's about. But I've always been like that.

Kaytee Cobb 34:20

So now I know better like that as well. The The reason that this challenge worked for me is that it was broad categories. So it wasn't read this book by this author and this book by this author, it was a broader category.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:36

Well, that would definitely make a big difference if you didn't have to read just a very specific book. Because for me, I think that's really what does it is when I have to read it by a very specific time or a really, really tight challenge category. Then all of a sudden, yeah, it's just it's just difficult for me, but this one, this one was good for you and you didn't mind that it was in a certain period of time. You had to read these books because clearly that's not a problem for you.

Kaytee Cobb 35:03

Well, no. Yeah, I think that worked out okay for me overall. Okay. All right, good.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 35:09

Well, up next for me, I think. But I'm not holding myself to this because if I do the next week, I will then you'll never reason I will not have these books to report on. I am reading *The City Baker's Guide to Country Living* by Louise Miller. And I'm getting ready to go on a trip in September to Vermont. And this is set in Vermont, in a bakery in Vermont in the fall. So it's kind of very cozy, it's very cozy, I have to say, and I've just read the first little bit of it. But so I'm kind of interested in that. And then I think I'm going to pick up *The Book of Essie*, that's a, you know, a book that a lot of people have been talking about, it gets fairly mixed reviews. I've heard a lot of people say they loved it. And I've heard a lot of people say I loved it, but I wanted more. It's kind of that book that is, I guess very loosely based on a reality. Reality TV family, kind of like the Duggars I guess people are saying it kind of evokes the Duggars. And then she is the daughter and apparently she turns up pregnant. And it's kind of about how they handle that within the bounds of trying to look a certain way on TV. And so I'm interested in that, that that topic having grown up in a really big church. That topic interests me. So I'll be interested to see how how the author handles that. So those are the books that are coming up for me.

Kaytee Cobb 36:34

Potential TBR

Meredith Monday Schwartz 36:35

potential. Exactly, exactly. So okay, so we wanted to just quickly wrap up talking about a book. This week, we've thought about each of us a book that we would love to put into the hands of readers a book that in fact, we feel very much like we'd say here, read this. This is so so good, too. Did you do you have a book this week that's on the top of your mind that falls into that category.

Kaytee Cobb 37:03

So as I was I was I was considering this for our very first episode, I feel like this is a lot of pressure. Because I feel like it it sets a precedent. But even though I already said this episode that I'm not a big re-reader, I did have one other reread earlier this year. That was a book that I just loved the first time through. And because it again fit into that summer reading challenge, I decided to reread it and this time I did it on audio and I just loved it just as much the second time and it's *Castle of Water* by Dane Huckle bridge. It could be at least partially the postpartum hormones. Like I mentioned, I have a newborn she's six weeks old today. But just like everyone smile when you need a really good cry. This is a book that delivers that right at the very end without being being spoilery. And, and otherwise, it's just this really well written beautiful novel, that, that I want everybody to read so that we can talk about being stranded on a desert island and which book would you take with you? And you know, how would you deal without having your contacts with you and all that kind of thing. So I just, I love it so much. And even though I don't normally re-read, getting to do so just made me so happy. So I would love for everybody to pick that one up.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:22

That is a book that I would re-read and I hardly ever re-read. I know our mutual really good friend Mary Heim was the person who was kind of making sure we all knew about it. And I am so glad and I have not only suggested that book to many people, I have purchased it for I think five different people and just sent it to their home and said, this book is so great. And I have to say I'm not a big lover of, of highly emotional books. I don't read books, like don't even get me started on Me Before You. I despise that book. Any book that I feel sets out to to make you cry. I'm just not there for that. This book does have an emotional ending, but Oh, it is such a great desert island story. It's so beautiful.

Kaytee Cobb 39:15

It's also fun. The relationship between Barry and Sophie is just so fun and feisty and real to navigate this Yeah, it's just it's a fun book that does have the emotional ending. So

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:28

yeah. And and it's and it's quick and super readable. And I would consider it a beach read. I mean, it's very, very unputdownable. I think so

Kaytee Cobb 39:37

I agree. As long as you don't read it on the plane on the way to the beach. I think that's probably fine.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:42

I would agree. Do not read it on a plane. That's right, as someone who's not a crazy happy flier. I will agree with you but it also did not like scare me to a point where I couldn't fly again. So I do I do want I know there are some books where people say do not read this book because it's about a plane thing. This is you know, probably not best read on the plane but it's also not going to keep you from getting on a plane.

Kaytee Cobb 40:05

Right? Absolutely. Okay, what do you got for us, Meredith?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 40:08

my book that I would love to be able to put into to our readers or listeners hands is The Sparrow by Mary Doria Russell. And this book is really not my normal wheelhouse kind of book. But I heard about it. Interestingly enough, I heard about it on Anne Bogle's podcast, What Should I Read Next. And this is my favorite part of this. It was a book that was the book that this particular guest really didn't like. And this is part of why I love and podcast is because sometimes even someone's disliked book, when you hear about it, it might be your most like book, right? I fell so hard for this book. So it's very hard to explain it. It basically comes down to Jesuits in space. And that sounds so weird and boring. But this book is incredible, incredible characters incredible story, the most amazing structure of a book. It's it's structured like a many petaled rose. And I'm sorry that that that sounded super twee, but it's it's very much like your you can kind of unwrap layer upon layer upon layer. It's definitely a book that I would say it, I think it comps to Station 11 in that it would be considered science fiction, but very literary science fiction, science fiction for people who don't normally read science fiction. It's got some of the most amazing scenes of Earthlings discovering and meeting an alien species. And it is so well told that

you are just along for the ride. And I am in love with the lead character, who's a Jesuit monk, but is so incredibly sexy. And I cried, and I don't like to cry. And I happily cried, I put this book in my husband's hands. He adored it. So *The Sparrow* by Marissa Doria Russell would be one that I would say when you start to read it, you have to give it 75 pages, because in the first little bit, you're going to feel like you don't quite understand like, there'll be things that are brought up and you'll be like, Wait, did I read? Wait, did I miss something, just go along for the ride. And when you get to 75 pages, you will be in it and just cruise to the end of it. And I I absolutely adore this book. It's one of those books that I feel like not only did I love the reading of it, but I feel like it, it almost like became a part of me. Like it really spoke to a very, very deep place, issues of faith and issues of unconditional love. And it's just it's a really, really incredible story. So that that's a book that I would that I would press into a lot of people's hands.

Kaytee Cobb 43:12

Well, you sold me on it. So I'm definitely go and I'm gonna have to go look that one up and try and figure out how I want to read it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:18

That would be one that I definitely would think that you would like, for sure. You and you in particular would like Okay, so this has been super fun. I'm really excited to I'm really excited that at the very least, even if it's just you and me. We get to talk books for a few minutes every single week.

Kaytee Cobb 43:39

Yeah, I think this is gonna be quickly one of the best parts of my week. So I'm really excited to get to talk to you again next week. And I hope you have a great reading week.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:51

Absolutely. Yes. And thank you listeners for joining us for the first episode of *Currently Reading*. You can find Meredith on Instagram. That's me @meredith.reads

Kaytee Cobb 44:02

And you can find me, Kaytee, at @notesonbookmarks on Instagram. The show can be found at @currentlyreadingpodcast on Instagram or you can email us at currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com

Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:17

You can find full show notes and links to all the books that we discussed at our website www.currentlyreadingpodcast.com and you knew we were going to say this if you loved listening and you love bookish podcasts, do us a favor rate and review us on iTunes. It'll make a huge difference toward us being able to gain an audience. So until next week, happy reading, Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 44:41

Happy reading, Meredith.