



Season 4, Episode 11: Recording Together + Lending Books to Friends and Family

Mon, 10/11 • 55:40

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 read recently. And as you know, we won't shy away from having strong but constructive opinions.

Kaytee Cobb 00:24

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 I'm realizing that podcasting is even more fun when you can reach out and touch your podcast partner.

Kaytee Cobb 00:45

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four coming to you live from Meredith's house in Austin. And I love pressing books into readers hands, both literally and figuratively. This is episode number 11 of season four. And we are so glad you're here. And we're so glad to be here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:02

Yes, Kaytee, I am so glad that you are here. We are so excited to have gotten to spend some time together, which is only the third time ever that we've gotten to be together in person. So this has been really, really fun. Alright, so we're going to talk a little bit more about that as we get into the show. But we want to let you guys know right at the top that our deep dive today is going to be about that dicey topic, lending books. How do Kaytee and I feel about owning books, lending books, are we precious about it? Are we very carefree and cavalier about it? We will get into that in our deep dive. But first, let's get to those bookish moments of the week Kaytee, I think you and I kind of have a joint bookish moment of the week. What really else could possibly be more of the moment of the week than what we're experiencing now?

Kaytee Cobb 01:51

There's only one option this week, Meredith, even if we had other bookish things happen, which of course we always do, being together this past day, and really getting to spend time just the two of us, which we've never gotten to do before, right? Spend an extended period of time and go out to dinner

and talk Currently Reading business behind the scenes and, and books and try not to talk about books so that we would be fresh and excited for recording together today. All of that. It's just so fun to get to hang out together and have those extended conversations about things that we don't necessarily always talk about, since we're usually so focused on just making our good content for you guys.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 02:31

Exactly. But it is interesting. One thing we've talked about a couple times is, it would be so fun, to be able to live close together and hang out all the time, right? Just because we would be good friends. But is it actually better that we don't because then because we would be so tempted to constantly be having bookish conversation, I think it would be very hard for us not to do. So the fact that we, when we come together to record we've kind of got all this saved up excitement and zest for talking about books. I think it actually is probably even if it's not better for you and I personally it's probably better for the show.

Kaytee Cobb 03:06

I think that's exactly what it comes down to that we would love to get to get together more often. But to be able to save up all that vim and vigor for getting on mic together is really what makes it sparkle and fun when we when we get to release a full episode. Right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:23

Right because we've already had to stop ourselves a few times just in the last day. So my bookish moment of it is related and it's actually about what we got to do last night. So when we talked about getting this time together Kaytee, you were smart enough to say you know what, we should probably also be sure that we're getting some fresh headshots and some fresh shots of the you know, a photoshoot with the two of us together because we really don't have much in the way at all a photos of the two of us together in the same room. Right so you hired a fantastic Austin area photographer Drew Elaine, and she met us yesterday at a spot that absolutely made my childhood dreams come true. You guys my library, the Lake Travis Community Library and Morgan the director, they were kind enough to let us go into the library and shoot after hours after the library was closed. Kaytee and I got to go into the library and we were like kids in the camp in a candy store. I mean, so literally so we're, I have I felt I told Morgan last night. This is such a bucket list moment like how often are you in a library and just have the complete run of it? Morgan was so kind to let us not only kind of move chairs and tables and whatever we needed for the photoshoot but she was like, grab whatever books you want from the stacks. Check out anything you want. Of course you could always check out anything you want. But like she was just so like, they were just not fussy at all they were like do absolutely anything you want to make the experience great, to make the photos great. Morgan stayed after hours on her own time. It was just absolutely amazing. And that actually led to an idea that we had Kaytee, we haven't fully fleshed it out. But we had this idea. Because we were talking about how excited we were to be in the library after hours. And Kaytee, I think you were the one who said, What if there was like a library lock in? Like, what if somehow, there was something, there was like an event that if you kind of donated to like Friends of the Library or something, you got you and like, eight of your friends or whatever could come and spend an evening in the library we talked about? Like, could it even be an overnight thing? Like would you want to sleep in the library?

Kaytee Cobb 03:32

Sleep in the stacks

Meredith Monday Schwartz 05:38

sleep in the stacks, like, you know. We would have to make it very glampy because neither you nor I are going to sleep on the floor. But like we would have to, but like, we just were having all these really fun ideas about how fun it would be to be locked in the library overnight to be able to say you've spent the night in the library. It was so fun. And again, a huge shout out and an absolutely heartfelt thank you to Morgan and everyone at the Lake Travis Library. You guys make my reading life so easy every single week, and you really gave us a fantastic place to do our photoshoot last night. We've seen some of the photos, and they turned out really, really well.

Kaytee Cobb 06:17

They did and I was so excited. You know, of course, taking photos is always awkward, like we talked about, you know what, in the moment you're sitting there like oh, I my teeth are getting dry from smiling so much. I have to fake laugh all the time. But I'm really excited to have pictures of us together since we get to do this so infrequently. And we really this time we like grabbed it by the horns and really took advantage of this time. So I'm really excited about it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:41

We did yeah, you guys are gonna see some of those soon and you're probably get really sick of seeing them actually because we're gonna use the heck out of these photos. Okay, all right. So fantastic, bookish moments of the week. Let's get into current reads. What have you got this week Kaytee?

Kaytee Cobb 06:55

Let's do my first current read this week is one that we've mentioned briefly a couple episodes ago, but I finally read it. It's Who is Maude Dixon by Alexandra Andrews.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:06

Oh, yeah.

Kaytee Cobb 07:06

Have you picked this one up, Meredith?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:08

I own this one. But it was one of those that I was seeing everywhere. And I was kind of hearing about a lot. And so I didn't prioritize it on my TBR. But I want to know what you're thinking about it.

Kaytee Cobb 07:19

All right. Yeah. Well, that's exactly what I wrote in my notes, is "we've all seen this book everywhere". But I feel like the setups that I've read and heard reveal entirely too much. So you are hearing things and reading things on the blurb that were that reveal things that happened more than halfway through the book, which is no, oh, no. So here's how I'm going to set up the book for you guys. If you haven't

had it spoiled for you, everywhere you look. Florence Darrow is working as an assistant at a publishing house when things go a little bit wonky at work with a sexual situation with a higher up in her company. This means she's on the job hunt again when she's approached by the editor of Maud Dixon. THE Maud Dixon. In this word "Maud" is a pseudonym for one of the most celebrated debut novelists in history. She is a rock star author, but no one knows who she is. Even interviewing for the position means that Florence needs to sign an NDA, a nondisclosure agreement. She talks to Maud on Skype, but has no video available for her, so Florence is visible on video, but she cannot see who Maud is because of the anonymity. And since it's a novel and the story has to go somewhere, I can tell you that Florence gets the job, gets to meet Maud and starts working with her really closely to do research for her next novel. That research takes them both to Morocco to suss out some details for the story. And then tragedy strikes. Florence is caught between telling the truth and being a good person versus maybe getting to move toward her career goals that she's always wanted but having to keep some secrets really tightly under wraps. The plot takes quite some time to get to that point of unputdownable page turning quickness. But the build up is pretty predictable to get there. However, once it quickens up it does not let up and I felt like I had to remind myself to take a breath on occasion when I was listening. While I did take time to settle into this story, I ended up giving this one four stars because even now it's been about a month since I listened to it and I've been thinking about it regularly. I've been wondering about what other people thought of it. I've just been really excited about getting this story under my belt and thinking about all the ways it could have played out so it's one that I've been thinking about quite a bit and I really enjoyed it. It's who is Maud Dixon by Alexandra Andrews.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:40

And Kaytee your setup I think was really, really great. And it totally cued in me. It reminded me why it is that I decided not to pick this book up. And it's because as an enneagram one, the whole "do I make the right choice or do I make the wrong choice for personal gain"... Just because of my oneness, I find it impossible to read a story like that because I, I literally don't have another option in me with right, right versus wrong, you know, like, it's not like oh, I'm such a great person. It's just like I literally don't have the option to do the not right thing. And so I can't, which is not again, I'm not trying to like say I'm like a perfect person, but you know what I mean? Like being doing the right thing is a super motivating factor for an enneagram one, and that part of the plotline is why I didn't pick it up.

Kaytee Cobb 10:32

It's tough. It's tough to feel for Florence as she makes some of her decisions in this book, you're like, come on, girl, you can do it. And she doesn't over and over again.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:44

That's tough for me. Okay. All right. So in my three books today, I am super happy to say that I have two five star reads. And one two star read. Okay, so we're gonna we're gonna bookend my three books with the five star reads. So the first one is a book that I think lots of people know about, but I had not picked up yet and I was one of those books. Why haven't I picked this up many years before? This is Shadow and Bone by Leigh Bardugo. I absolutely loved this book. Okay, so you've probably heard about it more recently, because there is has recently been a Netflix series that has come out that is about Leigh Bardugo's Grishaverse. So she's written a couple of different series that play within what

she calls the Grishaverse. And so this one is the Shadow and Bone series. And so and I, I absolutely loved it. Okay, so our story takes place in Ravka, which is a fictional country. That is, I think, probably meant to remind us of Russia. So that's kind of like the landscape that we're dealing in. The nation is separated by a very scary place, kind of running down the middle of it called the Shadow Fold, which is a place of darkness. And it's filled with creatures who are hungry for humans. Of course, because apparently that's all creatures ever want. Okay, so super tasty. So our main character is Alina Starkov. She and the regiment that she's been assigned to, she's a Mapmaker assistant, are on a mission through the Fold. It's Alina's first time making this mission through the Fold when things go really wrong. They're attacked by these creatures. Alina panics, and she reveals to everyone else and to herself, that she has a magical power, and she saves her entire regiment. But because this happens, and it happens with a lot of witnesses, word gets out to the Darkling, who's the requisite handsome broody, leader of the Grisha. And he takes her to the King's courts to help her control her power and possibly change the fate of the entire kingdom. But as we can guess, Kaytee, nobody is as they seem. This is YA fantasy at its best if you are an ACOTAR fan, the Sara J Maas, that all of that, you absolutely have to pick up Shadow and Bone. It is so so good. As I said, Where has this been all my life? So Mary Heim had talked about Six of Crows which is the other series that right right that gets you into the Grishaverse. I had tried Six of Crows but I had set it down DNF'd it without prejudice sort of to be finished later. Mostly because as Mary really well described it, it's a heist novel. Now for a lot of people that is catnip that is something that is super positive super like that's something makes them want to read it. I don't love a heist novel. That's not something that gets me into a story. But this one the you know, lead character who is way more powerful than she thought, that is catnip for me. So again, I love how we've got two different ways into the same universe. By the way now that I've read this one, I'm even more wanting to read Six of Crows so again, once you're in you're kind of in right I mentioned that if you like Sarah J Maas's ACOTAR series, I really think that this will be good for you. I do want to say that I feel like Leigh Bardugo's writing has a sophistication and a maturity that you don't see especially in that first Court of Thorns and Roses book by Sarah J Maas. I still really love Sarah J Maas. I also think that Alina is a much easier kind of hero lead to root for than Feyre in that right in that series even though they do have several things in common. And I'm you guys know I am a sucker for the Is he a hero, or a villain? Or a bad guy or a good guy? He's gorgeous and sexy and please help him be a good guy.

Kaytee Cobb 15:11

He's sexy and that's all that matters.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 15:12

Exactly right. I am holding off on watching the Netflix show because I want to get deeper into the series first before I start watching it because apparently the Netflix show sews together a lot of these books kind of seamlessly, or at least that's what they're trying to do. But I did take a peek at the guy who's been cast as the Darkling. And yeah, they definitely got that right, this guy will haunt your dreams. I loved that this book had some of the tropes that I love, but I felt that all on its own. It did not feel derivative. And I think that that's something I'm always really watching for. I love YA fantasy but you do see some of the same stuff. This felt very singular and fresh to me. And there's no question I'm sucked into the Grishaverse. So this book has a believable magical construct, which is rare in YA fantasy. It has

horrible, old crones that you can root for, which is something I love, and is also a rarity because the old crone is usually bad. It has a beautiful end page map and cartography that actually means something to the story. This is something that I loved. You need that map, and I kept referring back to it often. It has the perfect mix of settings, from sparkling ballrooms to creepy forests that I just adore. And that has a childhood friendship, turning possibly into a budding romance that made my 47 year old heart hurt in the best possible way. I absolutely loved this book and like I said, I can't wait to read further in the series. This is Shadow and Bone by Leigh Bardugo.

Kaytee Cobb 16:53

And I'm the bad reader that has only watched the Netflix series but I do love the casting for it. So as you were describing it, I was picturing the actors and actresses that they've cast and, and loving hearing you describe it as well.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:09

Okay, good. So you feel like it's you and you were interested in the show?

Kaytee Cobb 17:13

Oh, yeah.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:13

Okay, good. Good. Yeah, the Grishaverse is really so interesting.

Kaytee Cobb 17:18

Definitely. Okay, well, I'm going to slightly tie these two together, because I'm going to talk about a heist novel, which is the Six of Crows version of the Grishaverse. And I want to talk about Harlem Shuffle by Colson Whitehead. Okay. Okay, so if you had asked me last month or two months ago, about my most anticipated reads for Fall of 2021, the new Colson Whitehead book would have been at the very top of that list. All right. Listen, this man can write anything he wants to. I've gone with him on journeys I adored with books I've pressed into yall's hands, and ones that I did not love so much like character driven zombie novels. This one was in between those two experiences. In Harlem Shuffle, we meet Ray Carney, who owns a furniture store in Harlem on 125th Street. His reputation precedes him in the neighborhood as an upstanding businessman, but only for his customers. Because he also comes from a long line of gangster like uptown hoods and crooks. And that's a quote, balancing the light and dark sides of his personal life and his business lives, especially his under the table business lives has kept his family safe and fed for years and his bills paid. And that's even when his customers are paying on installment credit plans, which sometimes leaves his business a little bit in the lurch when he's given a job as a fence for his cousin Freddie's heist scheme, which means they're going to get all these jewels and jewelry and stuff, and then he has to find a way to sell it without bringing the cops down on them. The seedy underbelly of the city insinuates himself more and more into Carney's life through crooked, crooked cops, local gangsters, all while he's trying to keep blood off his shoes and his showroom carpets. This novel is full of unforgettable characters, but there are a heck of a lot of them. And while it reads like the cast of a 1920s gangster film, it's also one in which in which very little action actually happens. This is a rather internal story for being billed as a crime novel and which is what you see it as

all over the place. There are many pages in which it seems like nothing much of note happens at all, the heist that it's billed as is maybe three pages of this 300 page novel. There's it just it felt like it was more an exploration of 1960s Harlem rather than a crime novel or a heist novel or anything of the sort. At the same time, if you are one of the millions of happy readers who love being transported to New York City like me and even more so a historical neighborhood with its own personality and charm and characters, by the end of this book, I felt like I had gone on a journey, not just to New York City, but back in time as well to the 1960s. So basically, I'm saying you may come for the action here. But if you're going to stay, if you're going to stay for the atmosphere on the characters, you're not staying for the action. And I think a lot of readers will find that there's not enough propulsiveness in this plot to get them all the way through it. I once again, like I said, I will follow Colson Whitehead anywhere, I adore him. So I didn't have a problem keeping up with it continuing to read it continuing to be interested in it. But it was not the gripping story that I was expecting from page one. So that is Harlem Shuffle by Colson Whitehead.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 20:50

So do you feel like this is a case where if they marketed it differently, it would land it would maybe find the right readers more so and land with those readers? Or is it just, it's kind of a tough sell, unless you're a gigantic fan of his?

Kaytee Cobb 21:05

I think that they did it a disservice by calling it a crime novel, or a heist novel, or anything that sounds thrilling, because when you're going in with those words, in your head, you think you're going to be thrilled by what's inside, or at least propelled by what's inside. And that's not what you're going to get here. So I do think there's an audience for it, but the two will have a hard time meeting, because those people are not in this section of the bookstore. And the people that are in this section, the bookstore are not going to love this novel. So it's gonna be hard.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 21:38

It will be very interesting, because he certainly is, you know, one of the most preeminent authors of our day. He's got a lot of marketing power behind him. So I will be very interested to see how this lands in the book world at large. We Yeah, we I think we know how it's gonna land with critics because it sounds like it's well done. It's well executed. Of course, his writing is great. That will be interesting. Okay. Good. Well, I'm glad to hear from you first, Kaytee. Okay, my next read, this is from the womp womp files of Meredith Schwartz, because this is a book that I was really, really looking forward to oh, so much. I was looking forward to it. I want to talk about The Book of Accidents by Chuck Wendig.

Kaytee Cobb 22:18

Oh, no,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 22:20

I know, because I love Chuck Wendig. And so this one, unfortunately, had really, really great intentions, but it didn't necessarily 100% work for me. So first of all, here's the setup. And it's got a great setup. So lead character, Nathan, lived in a house in the country when he was growing up with his abusive father.

And he's never so he's now an adult, and he's never told his family, his wife about anything that happened there. And during his childhood, many years before our story starts, Nathan's wife, Maddie, was a little girl making dolls in her bedroom, when she saw something that she shouldn't have. And she spends her time as an adult trying to remember that last trauma by making haunting sculptures. Okay, so we've got a husband and a wife, who have some difficult things in their past. Long ago, something sinister and hungry, walked in the tunnels and the mountains and the coal mines of their hometown in rural Pennsylvania. And now present day, Nate and Maddie Graves are married, and they have moved back to their hometown with their son Oliver. Now, what happened long ago, is happening again. And it's happening to Oliver their son. He meets a strange boy who becomes his best friend. But this boy has secrets of his own and a taste for dark magic. Okay, like I said, I hate it when I have high expectations of a book, and then it ends up disappointing me, especially because Kaytee, this book started out really, really strong. It was rip roaring, the interesting, a little bit quirky, and held together with a super strong merit... narrative for the first 100 pages. So I thought we were golden. Right? Right. But then it started to get very, very weird, which I've learned in my reading, I can definitely be okay with weird in my novels. We've talked about several that fall into that category. But the weirdness has to at some point begin to make some sense. And this book just seemed to spiral more and more off into the realm of not the nonsensical more than anything. And by the last half, I really just wanted it to be over. I wanted to want to know what was going to happen, but also I just really wanted to stop being in this world, it felt super icky to me. This feels like a book that Chuck Wendig very much wanted to write. Like the one that maybe he feels, puts him on the same realm with Stephen King or Dean Koontz, or also like he really wanted to do kind of a Stranger Things, the Upside Down kind of situation. But the problem is that it never really landed for me. The narrative just didn't hang together in a way that helped me understand what he was trying to accomplish, because I have a feeling that he was trying to accomplish things beyond just being weird and having gory, scary things happen. But I couldn't settle into any of those themes, because I just kept being confused by what was going on. So overall, although I really do like Chuck Wendig's writing, this one was a disappointment for me. But if other readers read it and loved it, I definitely want to hear from you. Because I can't escape the feeling that I somehow missed something. Although I will say I did have some conversations with some other very, very trusted readers who had read it at the same time. And we all that small group ended up feeling the same way. But I really did feel that I had to double check myself because I was like, Wait, did I what did I miss? I read it closely, but I kept feeling like I missed something. So this is The Book of Accidents by Chuck Wendig. And I hate it when an author I really love puts out a book that didn't land for me, but maybe it landed for a lot of other people.

Kaytee Cobb 26:37

Right? That sounds like a big accident.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 26:42

Well it was the book of accidents. All right, Kaytee, what's your next book?

Kaytee Cobb 26:46

Okay, my third book this week is *Life's Too Short* by Abby Jimenez. I haven't brought any romance to the show for a while. I went back and checked because I was like, maybe I'm deluding myself, but it's been almost two months. So I'm excited to tell you today about the newest installment to *The Friend Zone* series by Abby Jimenez. Abby captured my heart with her sizzling open door scenes and witty dialogue in *The Friend Zone*. She solidified my love for her with *The Happy Ever After* playlist which is book two. And when I was in a little bit of a funk, I knew what I needed was some more of her banter and lightness and fun. So we're gonna meet Adrian and Vanessa, they are next door neighbors who have never met, of course. And that stays the same until the night that Vanessa's baby won't stop crying so Adrian offers to hold the little terror so that she can take a shower and wash the spit up out of her hair. When Vanessa exits the shower to find baby sleeping in the arms of her hot landlord lawyer, Adrian, she melts into a puddle, posts about it to her millions of followers on Instagram and YouTube, giving him the nickname Jesus's Abs because his abs are so gorgeous, they could only be owned by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and thinks that has to be the end of it. But of course, the bumps into each other in the hallway happened more and more frequently, as Vanessa and Adrian become enmeshed into each other's lives. And Vanessa needs the help. She's one of many women in her family who suffers from health problems that typically lead to an early death. She's sure she's not going to make it to 30 so she has cut off all romantic relationships. The baby is her sister's, who is battling addiction while also dealing with other family issues. Adrian has his own difficulties. Of course, no one's perfect in a romance novel, including a very recent breakup, and a job that demands all of his time free or not. I adored this book. I made Katie Proctor read it right after I finished it and send her and had her send me all her heart eye emoji faces because I knew it would hit the right spot for her as well. In the overall cosmos constellation of Abby Jimenez books that I've read this one is pretty tame on the open door scale. Sex happens but it's not often and it's not very descriptive and a lot of pages right. I dare you, if you are a lover of contemporary romance not to read this book and fall totally head over heels for Adrian and Vanessa who are completely lovable and wonderful and everything about them makes me smile. I know you can hear it in my voice. I loved it. It's *Life's Too Short* by Abby Jimenez.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 29:26

Alright I'm glad that you brought some romance we haven't had especially modern day romance in a little while. So I always feel like just something we need to do is we need to put this on the Mindy meter is this is this when as you guys know our co-host Mindy does not love anything that is overly graphic. So would you put this into the hands of Mindy?

Kaytee Cobb 29:46

This one I would allow Mindy to read without it being a dare. I think she would. She would like this one because it has plenty of frothiness and fun without it being any kind of salacious. So Sure,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 30:00

Exactly. Okay, right. Good. We just have to we have to check the Mindy meter on these. Right? All right. My third book is one that is skipping the line, Kaytee. And you know, when I skipped the line with a book, it is one that I want to get into readers hands right now, I do not want to wait, I don't want it to come up in my queue. It is the perfect time of year for you guys to pick up this audio original, which means it's audio only. And this book is a five star read for me. This one is *No One Goes Alone*, by Erik

Larsen. And I heard about this book from Kelly Hook, who is one of our bookish friends, and she puts out an excellent fall reading guide. And so this I had not heard about this at all. This is Erik Larson. It is fiction you guys. Erik Larson, of course, known for his narrative nonfiction. I've read several of his and loved them. But this is fiction, and it's an audio original, which means you cannot get it in print. You can only get it on audio and it is great on audio. Okay, here's the setup.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 31:11

At the start of our story, a group of British and American researchers set sail for the Isle of Dorn in the North Atlantic in 1905, to explore the cause of several mysterious disappearances, most notably a family of four, who lived on the island and vanished without a trace after a week long holiday at their island home. So our expedition led by Professor William James, a prominent member of the Society for Psychical Research, begins to explore the island's sole "cottage", and I'm putting air quotes around the word cottage, and the surrounding landscape in search of a logical explanation for some of the strange things that have happened. The island and the cottage, which is actually a huge, massive country home, are idyllic in every way. But it's not even one day into their expedition, that we know that something is very strange on the Isle of Dorn. Oh my gosh, you guys, seriously, put this book into your ears, and the entire world is going to fall away. This is the audio book for spooky season. It puts you right... It's ghostly but not occult or demonic or anything like that. So again, I know for a lot of people, they want to read ghostly, but they don't want to go that direction. It's interesting because Erik Larson himself calls this a novella. But it was very much novel length, like so it's not, it's not I think it was seven and a half, seven and a half hours, which is, you know, not super long, but it's definitely it felt like a full blown novel to me for sure. So again, I want to say this is I know because several people have questions on this, there is not a print version of this. Okay, so don't request it from your library. This is an audio original, because Erik Larson says at the end, when he does, in his own voice, a note kind of for the audio, he talks about the fact that he wanted it this way, because he believes that ghost stories are best told aloud. And this one definitely is for sure. The narrator is very, very good. It's not a full cast recording. But it is the narrator is very, very good at doing disparate voices. So I almost felt at times that I was listening to at least a multi narrator recording. This book grabbed my attention from the very beginning and did not let go, I listened. I would like several times, I would listen for a full hour, which for me, is a very extended period of time for my audio listening. In fact, I will tell you that I ended up going on the single longest run of my life in order to finish this book. My husband was like you've been gone for a really long time. I could not stop listening to it until I got to the end. It was like nothing I'd heard before and I was so sucked into the place and the time that I felt like I could see it like I was watching a movie. I will say that there are definitely times where Larson kind of lapses into the kind of narrative that he does in his nonfiction, going fairly far down scientific rabbit holes. I didn't struggle with this at all, especially in the audio. But there were times that I found myself thinking that there might be some readers who would lose a little bit of patience in those spots. There's not an over amount of them. But if you have that patience, I would definitely say that you will be richly rewarded with one of the best ghost stories that you've ever listened to. He absolutely doles out the creepy scary bits all the way through, keeping you off balance and wondering what the heck could possibly be happening. And the discussion between the major schools of thought at the time that people who believed in ghosts and spirits and the people who absolutely don't. And this expedition brings together, people from both those schools of thought on purpose like they wanted to, they wanted to bring that in the expedition was so

interesting. To me, especially as we watched things happen on the island, that each person, each of those people with their different schools of thought were trying to kind of make sense in their own brain. I will say that I was very satisfied by the ending, which is always a worry with a ghost story, because you always wonder is the author gonna kind of just leave us hanging and just sort of make it myster.... Like, we will never know! No, here, here the answer is absolutely not. It has a very, very satisfying ending. This is going to be on my list for the best books of 2021 for sure. And again, it's the perfect read for this time of year. So this is the fiction audio original, No One Goes Alone, by Erik Larson.

Kaytee Cobb 36:06

I love it so much. Do you feel like he, I mean, when I read his nonfiction when I read Devil In The White City, it felt like he's so good at like the perfect turn of phrase to keep you enthralled. And I feel like he has to be even better than that in fiction, right? Is that true?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 36:24

Yes, that's absolutely true. And in fact, there's one particular character and I won't tell you who it is because I want you to experience yourself who I found myself thinking that exact thing over and over where I would just be like, Oh, I just loved the way that you had this character speak. Like, I want to listen to this character, no matter what he's talking to. Erik Larson is a really really talented writer and putting his talent to what is a very creepy ghost story was just a match made in heaven.

Kaytee Cobb 36:57

Love it, love it. So what you just did is you fixed my conundrum for our drive home tomorrow. Oh, yes. And I can listen to this one together. I'm very excited.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:07

Yes, absolutely. It is the perfect book. I wish I had read it on a drive because I just was so irritated every time I had to like stop and go to work or whatever.

Kaytee Cobb 37:17

Yeah.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:18

Oh, my God. Okay. Okay, so let's get into our deep dive Kaytee. We are spending some time here together in my home. So we were started talking about Okay, so when you have those friends who live in your town, or live close to you, who you can actually lend physical books to although I keep thinking "Wouldn't it be so great if teleportation for physical books existed?" Because I, that would just be... that for the bookish friends, we would be in hog heaven. So given that it doesn't, how do you feel about lending your books and sort of let's take back one let's step back one step. I've been in your home so I think I know the answer to this, but how many actual physical... like do you own physical books? And if so are they books that you read or books that you haven't read?

Kaytee Cobb 38:10

I have shelves that I keep separate. One is my TBR shelf that is unread that's in a rainbow organization which come at me whatever I love it. And my other keeper bookshelf is separate. And it is organized by genre nonfiction fiction and then alphabetized... I'm very like librarian esque about that section of my bookshelves and that keeper bookshelf is the one that if people say you know, what have you been reading lately? Or what are some of your favorite books I like take them gently by the hand and lead them to the keeper shelf. Okay? Okay, that's where those live.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:48

Okay,

Kaytee Cobb 38:48

So what about you, Meredith?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:50

So well so let me just ask you this. So on the keeper shelf, if someone then comes over, is it fair play? Anything on the keeper shelf they can grab and take home with them? Or I mean how do you feel about that?

Kaytee Cobb 39:05

This is when I start to get judgy Okay,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:08

yeah, good, perfect.

Kaytee Cobb 39:09

So it depends on the person. It depends on how well we know each other. It depends on a whole slew of factors if I will even let you take the books off of my keeper shelf. Although I will go librarian on you and just say no, it's fine. I'll put them back later. Like you just take off what you're interested in and I will reshelve... Please don't mess up my entire bookshelf with your with your hands and doing all the things have you washed them lately, etc. I do though, and our friend Pam Hagen O'Brian is really good about this. She buys a used copy of The Other Wes Moore anytime she finds it in a bookstore. And I do do that sometimes with some of my very favorites. I will buy used copies if I find them for \$1 or \$2. And I will physically press those books into people's hands and say, this is your copy. Now you can pass it along, you can lend it to somebody else. You might find you want to keep it on your keeper shelf, but it now belongs to you. And I love having those books available. And then I also have my "read but not keeper" piles by my front door that are ready to go out of my home. And I love letting people go through those stacks and say if you are looking for books to take home, I certainly have plenty for you. These ones over here are my precious and they stay here with me. They live here, they're my babies. So okay, I'm a little I'm a little precious about my books. I'm not very good at lending and I have to be very specific when I do with like instructions about dog earring and cracking spines and things. I'm very, I'm high maintenance with my books.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 40:43

Okay. Okay, and I think that that's true for a lot of readers. So yeah, I would say I'm on the opposite spectrum in a lot of ways because the vast majority of the books in my house and I have a quite of quite a few books not like a crazy amount but I have you know, hundreds of books in my house. They are almost all TBR right? Because when I read a book it's either from the library or as soon as I read it, I put it into either a friend's hands or I put it exactly like you do into a tote bag ready to go to friends of the library book sale donation, you know, that kind of thing. And so that certainly is an area that when people come over, I let them you know, go through that first and foremost because those are ones that I'm wanting to let go of. I do have I think three total shelves in my entire house of books that are keepers. And I have of course all the Louise Penny books, which I will lend but I definitely want to get back because it's important to me that I have all of that I have all of those right but I will I will lend them out. Funny enough I'm not, you would think given my personality that I would be like don't dogear, don't crack the spine, don't you whatever... I'm really not mean I don't if I'm lending a book, obviously I don't want them to write in it, right. But other than that, I'm pretty free and easy with that. I have in addition to Louise Penny, I have a handful of other you know, Amor Towles now I have two editions of Greenwood, which I love. Pam Hagen O'Brian did give me the Canadian version signed by Michael Christie. So I love that I have the Dorothy Simpson series, which is just because they are out of print. So I have that series. So it's a really small number of books that I actually want to own. And I don't really know why that is, I think it's because I don't I have several copies of The Count of Monte Cristo. So I do when I go book shopping, if I find a really beautiful new copy, I'll buy that. And so I don't really do a lot of collecting, I don't do a lot of keeping, I think it's because I don't do a lot of rereading, but there are a few of those really, really, really the books that just make a huge impact on me, The Home-Maker is one that I have a couple different copies of, so they have to really make a major, major impact on me, I don't keep copies of all of my five star books, for example, I don't have copies of all those because I just feel like I would sooner than later be drowning in I would be drowning in books, but I will say that I do have like I said, I have a tremendous amount of books that I haven't read yet. And I'm not super precious about lending those although I don't lend to them a lot because I kind of feel like that's where I get a little bit controlling because I'm like well wait but I'm but what if I want to read that all of a sudden. So that's where my mood reader kind of like I want to have all of it available to me all the time comes into play. So I feel but at the same time people who have like these, like you or bookish friend Betsy, this, like a wall of like amazing bookshelves where they have many like signed copies of books or my friend Jen just forwarded to me an article from the New York Times about Otto Penzler who ran the The Poisoned Pen Press. He was a publisher of crime fiction. And he has recently built the most amazing library and or home that is really doubling as a library and it's based on a library at Oxford. He sort of like copied the library at Oxford in his home that I think's on the on the East Coast. So I love the idea of that. In my perfect fantasy world. I would have so much room for books that I could absolutely kind of keep more yeah I haven't achieved that yet in my life, but it's a goal to work for.

Kaytee Cobb 45:03

Yeah. Yeah, I actually right now my number my keeper shelf is the smallest it's ever been partially because I'm moved bookshelves at my house the other day so I moved my parents like my heirloom bookshelf now is in my homeschool area, which is great because there's so much space in there for the kids books and all the texts we use for homeschool. But then I switched the homeschool bookshelf over to the other area. And what I want to do is a wall built in in that space. But for right now it's very

condensed and very small. So I think eventually it'll hold my TBR and my keeper shelf will all be in one area, which I'm very excited about. But I do like having that one shelf that's dedicated to Oh, you you want to get to know me as a reader. Come with me. I'll take you on this short tour. Here's fiction that I love. Do you see something here that strikes your interest or that you loved that you can now give me a great book rec because it's like a visual representation of who I am. And books that really struck a chord and it shows the vast variety of books I've loved. You know, I've got Jane Austen and Colson Whitehead. I've got Brigid Kemmerer and Louise Penny, you know everyone in between so I love that shelf. It makes me happy.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:21

Yeah, no, absolutely. You know, sometimes when I really can't go to sleep at night, if I wake up in the middle of the night and I can't go back to sleep, one of my tricks is I will imagine if I had an unlimited amount of money I imagined like the the library that I would build or the home that I would build that would contain the library so that's kind of a good trick to like get your mind very focused on something that's really positive, it often works to get me back to sleep. So like that, right? So okay, the long and short messages.... Kaytee and Meredith don't do a very good job of lending a ton of books out that's like...

Kaytee Cobb 46:54

We're not super good at it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:54

We're not really good at it. But hopefully we're good at at least pressing books into your hands that make you want to go grab a copy somewhere because your library is really really good at press... at lending you books all the time and your local independent bookstore likely has these books in their in their on their shelves. So let's talk about books that we want to press into readers hands,

Kaytee Cobb 47:18

That's the other thing I do is I go over to that shelf when I'm feeling a little stuck. That book that I'm going to press is not necessarily always on that shelf. Not every book I press is one that I decided to keep but I do often get inspiration by looking at those shelves so today I'm going to press Lobizona by Romina Garber Russell.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:38

Oh, yes.

Kaytee Cobb 47:40

I love this book. Okay, so I got this book as part of my shelf subscription from Bookshelf Thomasville, and I'm so glad they put it into my hands because I adored it from beginning to end. I'm pressing it today because I recently finished book two in the series, which just released in August. It's called Cazadora. And it was an automatic pre order for me, totally lived up to the hype, so I'm excited to continue and see where it goes. In Lobizona, we get to fall in love with Manuela, who is undocumented, and has eyes with star pupils that are a gorgeous amber color. She suffers from periods so debilitating

that her mom gives her a special drug to knock her out for four days so she can sleep through them and the crazy dreams that come with them. Right when our story begins, Manuela's mom is being taken in by Immigrations and Customs Enforcement in the US which is known as ICE and Manu finds herself alone and afraid. While trying to figure out what to do with herself, she sees someone skulking around outside her family's apartment, so in a terribly bad decision hoping she can get some answers she jumps into the bed of his truck as he drives away. That bad decision for her is the readers gain because this leads Manuela to a school in the Everglades that she has to talk her way into filled with trees that move, witches and werewolves, and magical sports that you will love. The world building here I would give it an A plus. And we are sucked completely into the story... I can't even talk about it. We are sucked completely into the story, rooting for Manuela the entire time as she discovers not only this new world but more about herself in the process. I adored everything about this book from the gorgeous cover to the maps and the front papers to the Spanish sprinkled throughout and the amazing characters we get to meet. The plot moves along the entire time like the tide being controlled by the moon you cannot be held help but be drawn into this YA fantasy world in all the best ways. I love this book. I love this series is Lobizona by Romina Garber Russell.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:43

Well and you know that this was a huge favorite of mine too. I this I absolutely love this book. So this for sure belongs on our press shelf. Absolutely. Okay. Interestingly Kaytee I'm bringing a book today that is not gonna surprise you that I'm bringing it but it's also one that I got from my subscription to Bookshelf Thomasville. I feel like we haven't heard about.... We haven't talked about the shelf subscription in a long time. Obviously not not in any way, shape or form. I'm still a subscriber. I'm still a shelf subscriber, because I feel like they do you get one book, one book a month, I do the Olivia subscription. This one actually was from a different bookseller at the time, and I was a little bit nervous. But again, it was a book that I wouldn't have chosen for myself, but it ended up being a five star read for me. This is Wanderers by Chuck Wendig. So I wanted to bring this and put this on the press list because there's no question than it should be. But also because I feel really bad about not loving The Book of Accidents. So we wanted to be sure that we're I'm pressing the book of his that I really did love, which is also a really big book. This book is 800 pages, I think. Yeah, so know that but know that it reads like a book that is 300 pages long. Here's the setup of Wanderers by Chuck Wendig. One of our lead characters, we do follow several which is actually something that I really loved about the book is Shana. Shana wakes up one morning to discover her younger teenage sister is acting super strange. Her younger sister appears to be sleepwalking. She can't talk. You can't talk to her. You can't wake her up. And she is heading with a an absolutely single minded and really bizarre determination toward a specific destination that only she knows. And also she's heading that way with such determination that if you tried to stop her, she will actually like do something that could cause her physical harm in order to get past you like so she's she's got some special abilities in heading in this with this determination to whatever destination she's that she's going toward. But the thing is, they aren't alone. Soon, they're joined by a flock of these sleepwalkers from across America who all seem to be on this strange and indeterminate journey. And like Shana, there are other "shepherds", air quotes around that who follow the flock so other family members who are following the sleepwalkers to basically protect their friends and family while they're going wherever the heck they're going. But where the book gets even more interesting, that's kind of setup that you hear everywhere, right? Where the book is even more

interesting is that as the sleepwalking phenomenon becomes global news, we realize that the real danger might not just be this epidemic, but the fear that comes of it, with society collapsing all around them. And with an ultra violent militia threatening to exterminate the flock. The fate of the sleepwalkers depends on unraveling the mystery behind this epidemic and figuring out what the heck is going on. Oh my gosh, like I said, this book is 800 pages. So when you look at it, you're like, holy heck no. I am telling you guys, it reads like a book that is a quarter of its size it the pages absolutely fly. This is first and foremost, the story, the story of a world rife with tribal politics, then having to deal with a pandemic. So does this sound familiar? Right? So this was written obviously well before COVID or anything over the last few years, but it's interesting to think about it based on what's happened over the last couple of years. This book has fantastic characters. It has an absolutely propulsive plotline, I really, really loved this one. I've pressed it into a lot of readers hands in my real life, and to a person even if they don't normally read books like this. They have loved it. So I feel very confident pressing it into your hands. I will say if you loved Stephen King's The Stand, you absolutely must read Wanderers by Chuck Wendig.

Kaytee Cobb 54:05

Agree I read that one in March of 2020. As the world was coming to a close, basically

Meredith Monday Schwartz 54:12

Oh, wow.

Kaytee Cobb 54:12

And it was so I could not put it down. I could not put it down.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 54:17

Wow. That's a very interesting time to be reading it. I would if I had all the time in the world. I think a reread of it now would be very interesting. Yeah. All right. Well, that is it for this week. As a reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me I'm Meredith at @Meredith.reads on Instagram.

Kaytee Cobb 54:34

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 54:38

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 on our website at currentlyreadingpodcast.com

Kaytee Cobb 54:48

You can also follow the show at @currentlyreadingpodcast on Instagram or email us at currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com

Meredith Monday Schwartz 54:55

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Kaytee Cobb 55:19

Bookish friends are the best friends, you guys, all of those things are helping us grow and get closer to our goals. Thanks for doing that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 55:26

Alright, until next week. Happy reading Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 55:28

Happy reading Meredith.