



Season 4, Episode 22: Goals for 2022+ A Special Kind of Hell

Mon, 1/10 • 50:13

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 don't shy away from those strong opinions. So get ready.

Kaytee Cobb 00:23

We are light on the chitchat, heavy on the book talk, and our descriptions will always be spoiler free, and ad free, thanks to our Patreon supporters.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:31

Our bookish friends make this podcast happen when they spend \$5 a month on Patreon, and they get tons of bonus content and community in return.

Kaytee Cobb 00:41

Today, we'll be discussing our current reads, a bookish deep dive, and then we'll press books into your hands.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:46

I'm Meredith Monday Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas, and I am feverishly excited about my 2022 reading.

Kaytee Cobb 00:56

And I'm Kaytee Cobb. I'm a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico and I could spend all day talking about goals as long as I then get to work on them. This is episode number 22 of season four, and we're so glad you're here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:07

Okay, wouldn't that be a special like room in hell to get sent to where you set goals but then nobody will let you do anything. Or wouldn't that be terrible?

Kaytee Cobb 01:19

I hate that so much.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:21

So or, you know what would be worse, they put you in this room and they force you to work on things that are in contradiction of your goals to like they take you the opposite direction.

Kaytee Cobb 01:31

This is like a meanest thing you've ever said, in your whole life.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:34

I'm really good at fantasizing about what my own personal hell would be like.

Kaytee Cobb 01:40

Alright, so that lets everybody know that our deep dive today we are going to be talking about our goals for 2022. We've started a new year, we're very excited. We've got personal goals and podcast goals and we want to share them with you. We want you guys to buy in to those goals with us. So we can't wait to share them with you. And in the meantime, Meredith, let's get started, like we always do with our bookish moments of the week.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 02:01

There is no question that I have the bookish moment of the week, the bookish moment of my year, I have pretty much completed my project of working on my home library. I cannot tell you what a lifetime bucket list item this is for me, Kaytee. And actually, I probably don't have to tell you because you and everybody listening will understand this. I needed to tell my husband how important this was to me as far as a lifetime bucket list called having a room that is almost completely walled by books, and just having room to put books on those shelves that I have read and I don't want to immediately get out to make room for other books. I want to actually keep some five star books. Yeah, it feels so good. So I'm almost completely done. A lot of people have asked me so I've been putting this in stories. So a lot of people have been asking me about this. I didn't do custom shelving. This is the number one question that I'm getting. I did Pottery Barn shelving. The one big treat that I'm splurging on for this room, is that I am having a custom chair made for me for my reading and it is sapphire blue and it is crushed velvet and it is absolutely beautiful. But it is taking literally eight and a half months to get this done. So it won't be here till April. But that's the last piece of the puzzle. I'm so excited about it. This room is really like it's really come together. And it's just when I am in there, I just feel so happy. I'm it's exactly the way I wanted it to be.

Kaytee Cobb 03:41

And we all get to experience your joy when you share about it on stories. So I'm just so glad it's coming together the exactly the way that you imagined it would be. And that we all get to live vicariously through your bookish joy through this one. I love that too.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:53

I love well, and it also gives me a great place to take some photos. So please know that that's something that we probably all think about. Right? Like, oh, wow, this will be a good backdrop for for Bookstagram.

Kaytee Cobb 04:03

Definitely I agree. Okay, well, my bookish moment, I think a lot of people are gonna relate to this. So like many other readers, I have lofty plans every year to read my shelves, right? Like we all were like, "I'm gonna read my shelf this year." Ha ha ha. Probably also like many other readers, I also spent the final week of 2021 buying books like they were never going to be available ever again in my entire life. So I bought some for my husband to give me for Christmas. I grabbed some at the Barnes and Noble hardcover sale. I ordered some from Thriftbooks to read with the Short Story Sisters. And of course we'll be ordering books all year from the Indie Press List, Meredith, so I know that I will have a glut of books in my house that will be foiling my plans to to end the year with fewer books than I started the year with. So I make this goal and then I laugh at this goal and then I continue living my best bookish life just continue just filling my home with books and loving every moment of it. So that had to be my bookish moment this week. I just can't control myself basically.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 05:12

Right. So we basically have two almost identical bookish moments because that's really what it's about, right? It's not about the shelves, it's about the room on the shelves, for more books. And that it's just, you know what I mean. It's really, really a privilege. And I said this in my story yesterday and I really want to underscore, I don't take this for granted in any way, shape, or form, having the space in my house to do this. Having the ability to actually make this happen. I wanted to, I'm 48 years old, I have lived the majority of my life in the San Francisco Bay area, where if you have 1000 square feet, to call your own, you got to be happy. But guess what, you're not getting a library in 1000 square feet with a family. So almost the entirety of my adult life, I simply have not had the space or the where the resources to be able to do this. And so I don't take this lightly. Kaytee, I know you don't take it lightly at all that we have the combined resources to be able to surround ourselves with books like this because it is an absolute privilege. And I'm, I'm really honestly grateful for it.

Kaytee Cobb 06:18

I'm grateful. Also, we have plans for some bookshelves at our house this year also, and I'm very excited to get started on that project.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:27

Yeah, it's good stuff.

Kaytee Cobb 06:28

It is good stuff. All right. You know what we haven't done in like a month Meredith? We haven't talked about current reads. Do you want to tell us about some current reads?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:35

I am so ready to talk about current reads Kaytee. It has just been too too long. Okay. Speaking of reading our shelves, I feel really really good about this one because this is one that I just happened by it and I was like, "You know what, that book has been on my shelf since I think 2016 If memory serves." I picked up a book called Missing, Presumed by Susie Steiner. Okay. Does that ring any bells with you?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:42

Yes, I can picture it but I have not read this one.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:09

Right. Okay. Let me give you the setup. So at 39 years old, our lead character is Manon Bradshaw. She is a respected member of the Cambridgeshire police force, and though she loves her job, what she really at this point in her life is longing for is a personal life. She's been single for in her mind way too long, and she wants a husband and children really badly. So one night after yet another disastrous internet date, she turns on her police radio to help her fall asleep and she receives an alert that sends her to a really strange crime scene. Edith Hind, a beautiful graduate student at Cambridge University and the daughter of the surgeon to the royal family has been missing for nearly 24 hours. Her home offers very few clues, just a bit of blood in the kitchen, her keys and her phone have been left behind. The front door is ajar, but otherwise no signs of forced entry. Manon instantly knows that this case will be big and that every second is crucial to finding Edith alive. So the investigation starts of course with Edith's loved ones, her boyfriend, her best friend, her patrician, big wiggly parents. And as the search widens, and press coverage reaches an absolute frenzy, secrets of course begin to emerge about Edith's tangled love life and her erratic behavior that led up to her disappearance. This case is going to be big, yes, but it's also going to take every bit of skill and concentration that Manon can manage. Okay, this is a really solid police procedural set in the UK. And that's just a very particular sub genre of book that is one of my favorites. I've been reading this kind of book for a really, really long time. So when it's done well, it makes me really happy. And this book does it well, for sure. As I said it had been sitting on my shelves and so when I picked it up, I was like, "There's got to be a reason that I chose this book. And so I'm gonna see what past Meredith was thinking." And so I picked it up and I was like, immediately I was like, "Oh, that book sounds interesting." Side note, Kaytee, this is how we should read our shelves. What you need to do is go up to each book and be like, "What was past fill in the blank person, whoever you are thinking when he or she chose this book." I'll bet you will immediately remember it, and you'll also be interested in that book most of the time. So anyway, that's a side note. So I liked this book a lot. As I said, very, very solid police procedural the first 40% flew by the next 30% got bogged down just a little bit because it was trying to be, this book is definitely trying to be something a little more than just the sum of the parts of its mystery. And I like it. I like it when books are trying to be more than just that resolution of a crime. And I really liked that it delved deep into the lives of the different policemen that we're following. I like that it created characters that we could really understand and were able to understand their relationship with each other. It's also clear to me that what was happening in this book is that there was some kind of the police procedural equivalent of science fiction world building, right. So she needed to take some time in this book to set these relationships up. Because as of now, I can see that she's written at least a three book series. So that's part of the reason why I think that middle 30% got a little bit slower, because there was some of this world building happening.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:47

Also, I will say that that middle 30%, I think it's important to know that that middle 30% is really very much dealing with what I included in the setup, which is where our lead character Manon is in her life,

She's 39, she's single, she's not happy about it. Now, for some people, this is going to be totally great, not a problem. But for other people, that might be a little bit of a trigger. So I just want to be sure that we know, they get into this a lot. And there's a really realistic portrayal of what loneliness can look like, at that part of a person's life. It's also this book includes one of the most cringe worthy dating scenes that I have ever read. I literally had like one hand over my eye because it was so cringy, this dating scene. But once we got to the last 30%, the book picked up speed. I loved the ending. I loved the resolution. She did a really, really good job. I would say this book is definitely for people who love Deborah Crombie. And most especially if you like Elizabeth George's first 10 books, this book will be for you. That's really where the pacing is, you definitely have to be in it for the process, not just for the resolution of the murder. But when I get in a certain mood, that is totally my jam. I liked it a lot. And I definitely would read further into the series. This is Missing, Presumed by Susie Steiner.

Kaytee Cobb 12:12

That's a great title too. That's one of those titles that's gets in your head. So that's how I knew like, oh, yeah, I've definitely heard of this one instead of the, no girl, woman, other etc.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 12:21

It predates a lot of that, which is really, which is really great as another reason to read your shelves. Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 12:26

Yes, it is. All right. My first one this week is one that I read back in November. It's The Seed Keeper by Diane Wilson. This was a June pick on the Indie Press List but it felt cold and wintery when I picked it up and when we were pre-reading for that episode, so then I slated it for a bookish friends buddy read in November. That was the perfect time to read it. Not only is Diane Wilson an Indigenous author writing about a Dakota woman and her family, so the perfect for Indigenous Peoples Month, but this novel spans several generations and starts with our main character Rosalie on a snowy drive back to her childhood home. Again, perfect November is perfect for this at the beginning of the novel. She is a widow and a mother. But we have to piece together how she got to that point, not just through her own story, but through the generations of women that came before her and her family line. During the decades that she's been away from home, she lived on a farm learning through the soil of her garden, even as that farm is threatened by drought, and a predatory chemical company. Think Monsanto but like thinly veiled as something else, right? The buddy read discussion about this one was super illuminating in so many ways because we tackled farming and the foster care system and GMO seeds and land grants. And all of it was so much deeper and richer just like the soil on Rosalie's farm than it could have been due to the discussion that we shared. Rosalie and her family and friends are powerful women struggling through their own trials in the pages of this book, and almost universally in that buddy read discussion we were giving it four and five stars. These women become more and more real as you read this book. It's beautiful and compelling and was a wonderful pick by Collected Works bookstore in Santa Fe for again, the June Indie Press List. It's the Seed Keeper by Diane Wilson.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 14:14

Excellent. Okay, Kaytee, this is one that I was really, really excited to tell you that I absolutely loved because I finally because of you, I finally read *The Paper Magician* by Charlie N. Holmberg. I know. I read it. And this is one that you brought to the show as a press and when you were talking about it, I was like "Kaytee, how did this book get past me?" and you were like, "Well, I never brought it to the big show. I'm just bringing it straight as a press." So then I felt better because I felt like no, this is this is just right up my alley. So let me give you let me remind you guys just a little bit about the setup here. So our lead character is Ceony Twill. And at the very beginning of the book, she arrives at the cottage of Magician Emery and when poor Ceony arrives there she is pretty dang upset. She graduated at the top of her class from the Tagis Praff School for the Magically Inclined, and yet she's assigned an apprenticeship in paper magic, despite the fact that she really wants to be a metal magician. And the further rub is that this decision is final once she is bonded, meaning she's a Paper Magician, that will be her only magic forever. There ain't no going back and Ceony is pretty sure that paper is dumb. Dumb as a stump. She hates it. Okay. But as she begins to study with the odd, kind, and sort of hot magician Emery Thane, he's hot right? She realizes that the spells he's doing are pretty marvelous, animating paper creatures bringing stories to life via these ghostly images and even reading fortunes. But as she discovers that paper Magic might not suck nearly as badly as she thought, Ceony also learns of the extraordinary dangers of a different kind of magic of forbidden magic. Because this this person is really horrible, an excisioner as a practitioner of Dark Flesh magic invades the cottage and commits a violent act. And now Ceony has to learn fast to save her mentor, and herself. Oh, Kaytee, I loved this. book. This book is so so good. I have never read so you guys know that I love fantasy, especially with different kinds of magic. Right? And the magic constructs themselves are part of what I really love. I'd never read anything with this kind of magic in it. It was very interesting and very beautiful. That paper magic stuff. As Ceony is like, you know, she's so pissed off that she got assigned paper. And yet then all of a sudden, Thane is doing all these really, really amazing things. That's a really fun part of the story. And there's an I also loved it and it was great for this time of year because I find there to be something Dickensian about the story, which again is something that I love, that just I love being in that space. I kept thinking of *A Christmas Carol* as I was reading the story. I think it's the construct of being able to walk through a person's memories. And it's something that I'm fascinated by. And it's a really interesting way for this love story to begin. I loved the way that she brought this together. Overall, I enjoyed it so much. I would definitely call it a fantasy romance because that they're equal parts of both right? The romance is very light, and there's absolutely no sexy time. So very closed door, very Mindy approved. There are there are however, which is part of what made me like it, a few scenes that are pretty gory. Yeah. Like these scenes or you know this excisioner stuff is not is not a joke. So be aware of that. But I found that it gave the story an edge that I wasn't expecting, and that I really, really liked. I definitely am going to read further into the series because I have got to find out more of what happens with Emery and Ceony. And I really want to find out what glass magic looks like. I'm very interested in that. I do want to note that and I almost never note this, but just because this is a series and there's several in the series, I want to note that this is available in Kindle Unlimited, which I think is a really, really great deal. So if you're a part of that you can read the entire series for free. So this is *The Paper Magician* by Charlie N. Holmberg.

Kaytee Cobb 18:52

Oh, I'm so excited that you loved it. That makes me so happy. It was great. So fun. Okay, yeah. So my second book this week, there's a left turn. I'm going nonfiction. One of my favorite books of the year that I didn't get to talk about before the end of the year, It's Social Justice Parenting by Dr. Traci Baxley. When I finished this book, it went immediately onto my nonfiction keeper shelf. Traci Baxley, our author, has spent 30 years teaching diversity and inclusion classes, and has raised up five mixed race kids of her own. This is the book I've been waiting for ever since I started my own anti racism journey about five years ago. I wanted to be sure I was doing everything I could to raise my kids in a way that they weren't going to have to unlearn the same way that I was having to unlearn as I went through this process. So Traci Baxley has provided that here she takes her reader by the hand, she walks through the basics and the foundation, and then builds upon that with her ROCKS program. ROCKS is an acronym of course and gives a parent or educator the tools to create meaningful dialogue that leaves children with a stronger grasp. have their own power and ability to create change. And that's what we all want, right? We want to raise up change makers, we want to raise up kids who do better, because they know better, and a reason that anyone might need to buy this book, and I'm telling you, if you're trying to read your shelves, I'm giving you permission here. The final 25 pages is chock full of booklets separated by topic and then divided by age. So you can easily go find books about compassion for newborns and preschoolers or six to eighth graders, and everyone in between. Or maybe you want books about self advocate because he or antiracism, same thing, divided by age, you can find books that perfectly matched each of these different types of learning that your kids might be doing. So that just like the rest of us, they can gently learn through literature, which is the absolute best way to weasel your way in anybody's heart right? Again, the booklets are all there. Since this podcast audience is made up of bookworms and people raising bookworms, I know that all y'all are going to want to get a copy of this book. When I posted about social justice parenting on my Instagram. Dr. Baxley reached out to me personally with a kind and generous voice message. And I'm so glad to have made that connection with her. She was like, You know what, if you run into an issue in your parenting journey, I want to be there and I want to support you. Tell me what you're facing and I want to walk through it with you. Like she's just the absolute kindest person. Bookstagram, amazing that we get to connect with authors.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 21:25

That is, that is wonderful.

Kaytee Cobb 21:27

So she really is passionate about leaving that next generation just better equipped than we were when we were growing up and continuing that cycle to be better and do better. And so I just I want to like press it into your hands. I'm so excited about it. It's Social Justice Parenting by Dr. Traci Baxley.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 21:45

Oh, no, this is one that I am hitting "buy now" on because this is something that just is a very straight line to execution of what I'm wanting to do, actually, you know, I love that.

Kaytee Cobb 21:56

Yes. And I and it's not gigantic. It's not like one of those. I mean, I love my big chunky antiracism book, but it's not a Four Hundred Souls. It's not a Stamped From the Beginning where you're like, "Okay, now how do I actually like turn this into something manageable for my children?" It's like 203 pages or something before you get to that book list. It's so easy to get through and readable. She just did a wonderful job.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 22:18

No, she sounds like a really great person. That's a great one. That's a fantastic recommendation. Okay, my third book today is one that I know a lot of people have been waiting to find out how it is because it's the third in a series but it is fantastic. It is A Line to Kill by Anthony Horowitz. So this is the third in the Hawthorne and Horowitz series and yes, this is one we do need to read in order for sure. Alright, let me give you a little bit of a setup. As our story opens. Our favorite crotchety ex Detective Inspector Daniel Hawthorne and his unwilling sidekick author Anthony Horowitz are invited to an exclusive Literary Festival on Alderney. Alderney is an idyllic island off the south coast of England. And when Hawthorne and Horowitz go there they expect some vacation ish time. They don't expect to be knee deep in a murder investigation. Arriving on Alderney, Hawthorne and Horowitz soon meet the festival's other guests, which is where the fun really begins. This gathering includes an eclectic bunch, including a best selling children's author, a French poet, a TV turned cookbook author, a TV chef, not a TV that turned into a cookbook author. That would be weird. A TV chef turned cookbook author, a blind psychic and a war historian, along with a group of very cranky locals who are involved in a feud over a disruptive power line. Well when a local is found dead under mysterious circumstances, Hawthorne and Horowitz become embroiled in the case. The island is locked down. No one is allowed on or off and it soon becomes horribly clear that a murderer lurks in their midst and Hawthorne and Horowitz have to find out who. Oh boy, you guys know. I love Anthony Horowitz. I love his writing. And there is so much to like about this third in the Hawthorne and Horowitz series. I really enjoyed this one so much. And I think the key was that I gave it a lot of time between the second and third books. When I read the first two, I went too quickly from book one to book two and book two felt a little bit stale. With this particular series. I really think you'd benefit from having time apart from them before you're ready to get back into their dynamic. So now that I've had some time since I read this one, I am struck by the fact that the thing about the series in general that bothers me more than anything else is the relationship between Hawthorne and Horowitz. Detective Inspector Hawthorne is cynical and distant and completely unknowable and Anthony Horowitz, the character is whiny and needy and just completely annoying, and their interactions together should be funny. But in this third outing, they aren't and it's just kind of sad watching them go back and forth. It's kind of just a toxic situation. But the characters and the plot in the rest of the story more than make up for it, and I ended up having a really enjoyable time in this book. They are definitely a modern Sherlock and Watson pairing and my hope is that Anthony Horowitz, the author, will flesh out their relationship a little bit more as the series continues. He needs to make them either enemies or friends one or the other. Pick a lane Anthony, please. But otherwise, please keep writing in this series because I absolutely love it. So that is A Line to Kill by Anthony Horowitz.

Kaytee Cobb 26:02

You saying enemies or friends make me think that maybe he should just make the full jump and make them lovers. What about that plan?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 26:09

Well, that would take it a new and fresh direction would really really good. Yes, no one would see it coming.

Kaytee Cobb 26:17

Alright, well, that kind of plays into my third book this week, which is *The Love Hypothesis* by Ali Hazelwood. Meredith, you just heard me talk about this last week. But I still have to bring it to the show as a current read even though I already talked about it as one of my top 10 for 2021. This was the only romance that I put on my 2021 list. And it was in the best of because I loved it and so if it feels like I just talked about it, like you can skip forward to when we start our deep dive, it's okay. I'm not going to have my feelings hurt. But if you want to hear me gush, again about one of my favorite books of 2021. Here we go. As I mentioned on that episode, this romance has a bit of an age gap, a very open door, and a one bed trope that left me breathless, like I had to go back and pick up *Breath* by James Nestor so that I could remember how to breathe appropriately because it was not going well for me for a little bit there. This book is what we would call the newly coined term romance plus, which means it has steamy excitement. But it also deals with some deeper themes like in this case, women in academia, but it could also deal with romance plus can touch on you know, autism and how that affects romance, right? It could touch on mixed race relationships, it could touch on any number of things that elevates it be beyond that just first they didn't like each other and then they did and then they had steamy sex at the end right? We want a little more than that. Romance plus. Here's the setup. As a third year PhD candidate Olive Smith, our main character, doesn't believe in lasting romantic relationships. But her best friend does. And that's what got her into this situation. She has to convince Anh through proof because she's the scientist. So like any self respecting scientist Olive panics and kisses the first man she sees. That man, of course is none other than Adam Carlson, a young hot shot and hot professor and well known a-hole, which is why Olive is positively floored when Stanford's reigning lab tyrant agrees to keep her charade a secret and be her fake boyfriend because he has an ulterior motive of his own. A fake relationship trope can only go so far before someone is bound to catch feelings. And in this case, those feelings light the bunsen burner of desire. That's my little lab pun. Are you proud of me?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:31

That's perfect.

Kaytee Cobb 28:32

When you finish this book, the author has a bonus chapter on her website that I could not handle like I had to like remove a sweatshirt or two. Holy goodness, someone get the ice water. It was that steamy. It's *The Love Hypothesis* by Ali Hazelwood. I highly recommend it but like, you know, like take it for a weekend away or something ladies because it is, whew my cheeks are pink even talking about it right now.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:57

So but Kaytee, you said there's an age difference. Who's the age difference between? Is it older man?

Kaytee Cobb 29:05

Right? Yeah. So Adam Carlson is a hotshot professor. So he's already completed his PhD. He's probably three to five years older than Olive Smith, who is a third year PhD candidate. So she is 24-25 years old. And he's 28-29. It's not a huge amount, but but mostly the age gap is about the power differential. Right?

Kaytee Cobb 29:12

I was gonna say, I'm seeing a power differential that would might make this a little bit frowned upon. Okay, right.

Kaytee Cobb 29:34

Right. So it's a little bit on the nose. There's definitely people looking down on it within the story. Like, excuse me, is that allowed, are you? Well, I'm not her professor. It's okay, etc. But it's really spicy, and really good. And I've seen it on a lot of Best Of lists, which makes me happy.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 29:50

Yeah, it sounds like it was really, really good.

Kaytee Cobb 29:53

Excellent. All right. Well, those were our six current reads. They I mean, we went all over the place there. I'm really happy with that. And that means we get to now get into our deep dive, which is all the goals that we have this year. A couple days ago, Meredith and I sat down on a week that we didn't have any recording to do. And we talked about, you know, this podcast has done some amazing things that we never expected. What else would we like to see happen in the future? So first, let's go personal, Meredith. And let's talk about what you hope to get out of your reading life for 2022. What kind of goals have you set?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 30:25

Right, so as we've talked about, every year that we've done this, I never set goals related to numbers of any kind, right, I don't set a quantity goal, I don't say I don't set a quantity goal within genre, I don't, I don't do any of that number goal setting, only because I'm numbers driven in every other part of my life. So in my reading, I try to keep numbers out of it. But what I say I'm going the complete opposite direction, but it's the direction that I felt very much pulled two through 2021. And that is, my main goal for my reading in 2022, is to be very, very intuitive about what I want to be reading. So I think what that's going to mean, because it already is I'm putting this in action at, I think I'm probably going to be DNFing or not right now-ing, NRN a lot more often than I do right now. Because right now I do a book flight, and I kind of decide on a book. And I mostly, once I do that, I go ahead and read it. I'll DNF every now and then. But I think what I'm going to do even more is say even after I choose from my book flight, I'm still not completely committed to it, if at all is not feeling right, I'm going to set it aside, not right now. And I'm going to go for something else. Because I want to spend every day that I possibly can reading

books that feel really right to me, instead of trying to get through a book so that I can get on to the next book. That's the feeling that I don't want to have. That's my goal for this year.

Kaytee Cobb 31:59

I like that. That plays into my goal as well. I actually wrote on my goals "DNF more often", because I don't do it very often. And sometimes that leads to really unsatisfactory reading experiences. Although we do know y'all love a spicy opinion. And that is fun. Sometimes mostly, I don't want to have a book that by the end, I am mad at myself for taking the time to read it. Like I just I don't like that feeling. I like last year, I have a goal to read less in 2022 than I did in 2021. I finished the year with 298 books. I would like that to be a little less again.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 32:35

Wait, hang on, hang on my I'm sorry, I'm literally just nothing in my body can keep me from asking the follow up question. A little bit less is 25 books less? Five books less? What's a little? What's an okay amount of less?

Kaytee Cobb 32:48

So the year before in 2020, I read 316 books, which means I read 18 fewer in 2021. I would like to see that drop again. So hopefully, maybe around 280, maybe a little less would be great, but I'm not going to beat myself one way or the other to make sure that I'm reading less, you know, like I would like to again, have my average book length be longer than it was before. And usually that would mean that I have fewer books at the end of the year as well.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 33:20

What's your why for less?

Kaytee Cobb 33:22

Mostly because I feel like my brain is too full of books. Like, it's hard to get to the end of the month and say, "Oh my gosh, I have all of these, how do you even pick a best because you read so many books" like that. I would like to step that back a little bit and just say, you know, if you only have to pick a best out of 20 instead of 28. Like that 28 is not good number for me. I don't like that number for me.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 33:49

Right? You want to give your brain more bandwidth? You want to I understand that. I think that makes a lot of sense.

Kaytee Cobb 33:55

I would. And I think that's a good thing for my brain in general. The stat that I really like to pay close attention to and have been since 2017 is reading diversely. In 2021, I read 53% Own Voices books, I would like to see that continue to improve. I know that everybody starts somewhere and not everybody even tracks this, but I even looking at my actual Own Voices reading, they end up being rated higher more often. And I think that's because I'm picky about them. But it also means that that's where my really great reading experiences come from is reading Own Voices literature. So I want to continue to

see that going up both in racial diversity and in LGBT and disability and any kind of experience I can get through a book that's not my own experience. That's what I want to be chasing after in 2022. And then DNF less. Oh, I also want to read at least one Indie Press List book a month from cover to cover, not just preview it for our show.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:56

Sure. Sure. That makes total sense. Well, the other goal that I have for myself, which is right there in line is that I am for, you know, for 21 years now, I've been keeping my book journal in one particular way. And then I think I mentioned in one of our previous episodes that I have decided to make the jump to the reading tracker Kaytee, that you created, that is available to our bookish friends who support us through Patreon, because I hadn't done it before, because I felt like the reading tracker tracked more than what I personally wanted to track. So it felt like more than I would be, more attention than I would be able to give it. But then I realized this year, through some of the overviews that you did, and the way that you really led us all through this is that we can hide any column or any tracking metric that isn't near and dear to our hearts personally. And so I was able to do that really quickly and easily. And so now I have I'm excited. We recording this on January 1. As of today, I'm excited to start putting books in that I'm tracking in ways that I haven't tracked before, but it's not tracking more than what I want to personally pay attention to. So that's another goal that I have. But it's weird to call that a goal, because it's just something I know that I'm going to do, right. Whereas a goal feels like something you have to work, you have to be really mindful of working toward it. So that's definitely there. Well, good. So DNF more, read more books that feel really, really right. I think we're really going to try to normalize the use of the term NRN instead of DNF. Because DNF feels like like if I quit this book, I never shall return to it. But NRN just feels like not right now. I'm I may very well pick it up again, five months, five weeks, five years from now, but it's not perfect for the mood I'm in right now.

Kaytee Cobb 36:54

Yeah, and I like to let that happen with actual books I'm reading and books that are on my shelves that had just have not called me for a very long time. I know that if it's needed in my reading life, it will find me again. So it's okay to set them aside no matter how far you made it into. Alright, so now we have some podcast goals to talk about Meredith. And last year, we did this as well and what was the best about bringing everyone into our podcast goals is that y'all like jumped on the train with us. You wanted to see us hit those goals, there was a whole party in our Patreon bookish friends group when we hit some of our goals over the course of this past year. And it's because we let you know them, we put them out there into the world. So let's talk about the goals we have for 2022 how we want to see Currently Reading grow.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:43

Yes, so we do this every year in the form of a meeting that we that we have first and foremost right at the end of the year. And what we do with that is you and I both just kind of do some thinking beforehand. And we come to that meeting and we just talk about really big picture. So 50,000 foot view, what are the things that we want to really concentrate on for this next year? We want to winnow it down, because I think if you're concentrating on too many things, you aren't going to make a lot of progress on any of those things. So we went at it down to three main things that we are going to be putting our time

and talents towards. So our three pronged approach, we'll be growing our Patreon numbers, because that helps grow our small business. We have a goal of 2022 in 2022. Isn't that nice? Isn't there a nice there's alignment with that, right? Right now we're hovering over 1600, which is higher than we ever thought we'd be at this particular point and so 2022 feels like a really good goal. We always set then a stretch goal and our stretch goal is 2222. So we shall see if we can get to one of those this year. Our second prong is that we want to grow our listenership as a whole. And we have some then plans to do some things to grow that aggregate listener number, that number has grown a lot. But we think we haven't hit the ceiling yet. So we want to grow that. And then we also want to invest our time and talent in the Indie Press List continuing to grow its popularity, quality, its reach, its effect on on the books that we talk about, its sales numbers for the bookstore. And then also we want to really continue to develop relationships with great bookstores all across the country. We've talked about the fact that we already have our slate of bookstores set for the year, which we were completely shocked to have that done before the year even started. So what we want to concentrate on is making sure that we have as many listeners as possible to that content, and that we have really great relationships with each of the bookstores this year, and bookstores that we will be hosting on the show going forward. So those are the three big prongs of what we are going to be concentrating on for 2022.

Kaytee Cobb 40:06

Yes, I love that. And just like last year, we would love for you all to kind of buy into this. If you have been on the fence about becoming a patron, maybe that's how you buy in. If you just love the actual big show that we put out there, maybe you share it a little more often, because that helps grow those download numbers. If there's a guest that you think would be a really incredible fit for our show, maybe you tag them in one of our posts and say, oh my gosh, I would love to hear from so and so on your show because that opens the door and each of those things across the board helps to make sure that that basically you're helping us climb the ladder. You're making Currently Reading have this magic happen behind the scenes and we can continue to make the content you love, the bonus content, you love the connections, you love the community that you love, all of that, because of the fact that we have amazing patrons, amazing bookish friends and amazing listeners who continue to share about us continue to shout us out to the rooftops. That I mean, that's how we got from being the tiny podcast that we were in August of 2018 to where we are today.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 41:08

I know Kaytee, one of the things that we were able to do last year is we were able to take on our first employee, which Megan who does all of our show notes and is working on our social media with us. The fact that our Patreon subscribers have been so generous and loyal to us, that enabled us to do that kind of work and expand our scope even further. So it's really, it's really exciting. The way that we're able to make this grow as the business that it really is. Because that really is I mean, know that it's doing great things for you and your family, I know that I definitely consider it to be our small business and so we're really growing it in that way. And it's it's really I mean, we're just having a lot of fun doing it, we're so grateful to be able to do it.

Kaytee Cobb 41:51

It's the best kind of job, the kind that you love to go to, and the one that you can't wait to talk about and perform every day. Right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 41:57

Exactly, exactly. But we are, it is true that when our listeners and our patrons subscribers, when they get behind the goals that we have set, that makes a huge difference. And also, there's a there's a lot to be said when you're goal setting for putting your goals out there as a way of holding yourself accountable. And this is a very, very, very public way for us to be to hold ourselves accountable and just say these are the things that we're committed to growing. And so we're going to concentrate on just these things, not a million other things. We're not going to get drawn off on them in a million other ways. We're going to concentrate on just these things. And we're going to try to do it really, really well bring a lot of quality content to to readers all over this year.

Kaytee Cobb 42:41

Definitely. I'm so excited to see what happens in 2022. It's just an exciting year. I feel like it's a very it's a pivotal time for everyone.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 42:51

Yeah, but really, I'm really excited in a way that I haven't been for a really long time about what what the year is gonna bring to so I think it's going to be good. Yeah,

Kaytee Cobb 42:59

I'm almost ready to set another one word intention for the year but I got burned so bad with 2020 that I just have shied away from that for a while.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:08

I haven't been doing, I haven't been doing to be there for a while.

Kaytee Cobb 43:11

All right, let's go ahead. I feel like that was a great conversation. Let's go ahead and press some books into their listeners hands. Everybody loves this section. Meredith, what are you going to press this week?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:21

I'm going to press a book that came out all the way back in 2004. And when I was going through my book journals, because I was preparing for the new episode of All Things Murderful, which I was working on our first episode with Elizabeth Barnhill from Fabled, she's co hosting with me. So that's part of our Patreon content. But I was going through a book journal to prepare for that. And I came across this book that came out in 2004. I read it all the way back in 2007. And I remembered it all of a sudden, and I was like, Oh, I have to press this book because I loved it. It's a great creepy book for this time of year. It's called The Ghost Writer by John Harwood. So here's the setup. Timid, solitary librarian, Gerard Freeman lives for just two things, his elusive pen pal Alice, and a story that he found hidden in his

mother's drawer years ago. God poor Gerard. Written by his great grandmother, Viola, it hints at his mother's role in a sinister crime. And as he discovers more of Viola's chilling tales, he realizes that they might hold the key to finding Alice finally for the first time in real life, and unveiling his family's mystery. But upon returning to his ancestral home in England, Gerard finds that the stories within stories of his past begin to blur the lines between fact, fiction and fantasy. They're also driving him so deep into the dark that he might not be able to see what is right in front of him until it's too late. This book...

Kaytee Cobb 44:57

I got goosebumps listening to you talking about that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 45:00

It's really, really creepy. Okay. My book journal reminded me that I found this book when I had just come off of reading *The Thirteenth Tale* by Diane Setterfield and I was looking for that same like really good Gothic mystery that's really page turning and boy did I find it. This book was engrossing from the start, and it was downright creepy. I noted in my book journal that I only read it with all the lights on. The ending required some attention, but after I finished reading it, the book made sense. And I couldn't quit thinking about this novel. This is perfect for you, as I said, If you loved *The Thirteenth Tale*. Also, if you like Rebecca, I think you would really like this book. And it's also for you, if you love book within a book stories. It's got that in spades. It's excellent winter reading, and it has a variety of really great totally creepy covers, which I think is really interesting. There's several different covers available over the course of the last, what 17, 18 years that it's been out. All of the covers are really really good. You just can't go wrong with *The Ghost Writer* by John Harwood.

Kaytee Cobb 46:14

Oh, that sounds so good Meredith and definitely perfect for this time of year especially, I mean up here in the northern hemisphere, like, northern centric, but I just got my first big snow today. And that feels like a very good like ghostly like curl up by the fire but also make sure the lights are on and that nobody's outside your house ever, ever. Right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:32

So that's my January in December. I like to read stuff that's a little more like good feelings. Once I get to January, I am ready for the creep fest again. And this book is perfect.

Kaytee Cobb 46:43

Love it. Love it. Okay, I am going to press this week. My top book from 2020. So I get to skip back a full year it was *Pride* by Ibi Zoboi. I read it early in that year, but it was released in 2018. So you should be able to get it no matter where you get your books from. I'm finally ready to press it into your hands. *Pride* by Ibi Zoboi is a retelling of *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, right in a current day neighborhood that's being gentrified. The very first line, of course is amazing. It's "It is a truth universally acknowledged that when rich people move into the hood, where it's a little bit broken and a little bit forgotten. The first thing they want to do is clean it up." I love it. I love it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:25

That's a great first line.

Kaytee Cobb 47:27

Zuri Benitez is our main character. She lives there with her three sisters and they are completely uninterested in the stuck up Darcy family when they move in across the street with their fancy house and their fancy car. But when Janae, one of the sisters starts falling for Ainsley and his brother Darius starts being a judgmental a-hole, the plot starts to come together. You can hear even in this tiny setup, you can hear the threads of Pride and Prejudice the classic version woven into this new retelling. This updated version of a classic is my favorite retelling that I have ever read. And still almost two years later, I smile every time I see it on the Best Of lists on a bookshelf or when I just page through it in my home I will walk by and like touch the spine and be like "Hi friends." Izi Zobi has given us a completely charming cast of YA characters that are not angst, situations that make it clear that young love is a classic trope for a reason, and a neighborhood that comes to life on the pages of this book. I love it with my whole heart. It has a fantastic cover whether you get it in hardback or paperback or both, if you're me, and I just I still love it. And I want everybody else to love it too. It's Pride by Ibi Zoboi.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:39

I love it when you talk about this because it is totally clear how much this book delights you. And also if I met someone who was named Ainsley Darcy, I think I would smack him full on the face for sure. Right? That's really obnoxious.

Kaytee Cobb 48:53

It's really bad. And then the even the brother being named Darius Darcy, I'm like, Ah.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:58

But at least that has the you know, the alliteration. No, it's sounds evil, which is better than Ainsley Darcy?

Kaytee Cobb 49:06

Oh yeah. Both of those brothers. What are you gonna do with them?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:10

Alright, 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 49:18

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:21

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 49:32

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:38

And if you really want to help us become a Patreon subscriber for just \$5 a month, and you can also rate and review us on Apple podcasts and shout us out on social media. All of those things make a huge difference toward us finding our perfect audience.

Kaytee Cobb 49:53

Yes, bookish friends are the best friends. Thanks for helping us grow and get closer to our goals.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:59

Alright, until next week. Happy reading Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 50:01

Happy reading Meredith.