



Season 4, Episode 4: Reader Whiplash + Literary Hall Passes

Mon, 8/23 • 55:26

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:10

Hey readers, welcome to the Currently Reading podcast. We are bookish best friends who spend time every week talking about the books that we've read recently. And as you know, we never shy away from strong opinions. So get ready.

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 a firm believer in each person's right to love the books they love.

Kaytee Cobb 00:44

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico. And I haven't made out with a book, but I would definitely consider it. This is episode number four of season four. And we're so glad you're here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:55

Oh, Kaytee making out with a book, with a character from a book, we both have a lot of thoughts on this topic.

Kaytee Cobb 01:01

We do, and author photos and I mean... So spoiler alert friends, that's our deep dive today we are going to talk about our literary hall passes: authors and characters that we maybe want to smooch, or that maybe we want to be best friends with. And I'm excited to get into it. And we also have a lot to discuss from the Currently Reading bookish friends group. So they have many thoughts on this topic. But first, we're gonna get started the way we always do, which is with our bookish moments of the week, Meredith, what is bookish in your life this week?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:32

All right, my bookish moment of the week was a realization that stopped me dead in my tracks. Kaytee, I so I've talked many times about how I'm the one who choose, for the most part chooses the books that my husband Johnny reads, right? So he kind of relies upon me to hand him whatever book he's going to read next. And that's a lot of pressure. But he but he isn't super picky, he'll kind of read pretty

much anything, right? So it's really not not a problem. But I have really tried to make a study of what it is that he enjoys and moves through really quickly. And what I what I've long known is that his tastes and my tastes are very different. I tend toward things that are very plot driven and move quickly. I like a lot of murder, a lot of murderous stuff, right? We all know that. Johnny, he'll read the odd thriller, you know, whatever, if I think it's really great, but that's not really his thing. So I've long known that and what I've thought for a long time, Kaytee is that his taste ran more to your taste. Right? So you guys have you definitely have more overlap than he and I do. But here's the realization that stopped me dead in my tracks. You know, who is his more likely to be his book, twin is Anne Bogel. Anne Bogel.

Kaytee Cobb 02:52

Oh, wow, that has stopped me dead in my tracks as well.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 02:56

And that's what I'm saying. He loves a super character driven, slower paced, very evocatively, poetically written novel. This is his kind of sweet spot. And I was realizing it. So Stephen King is his favorite author of all time. But I realized this partially because he likes Stephen King, not because it's scary or gruesome or any of that. What he likes about Stephen King is the slow character development that he does in these big gigantic 800 page novels. Right?

Kaytee Cobb 03:36

Right.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:37

He takes his time to develop it and develop the story. And it's very slow burn. No, I think Stephen King makes it interesting the entire way. But Johnny's taste runs much more to that prose heavy, character development side of things. And I am now looking more to Anne's taste, which is, you know, we all know she's an incredibly fantastic reader. She just happens to not be my personal book twin, but that's useful to know, because now I'm using more of her her books to kind of guide Johnny. So he has quite a bit of Wendell Berry in his future.

Kaytee Cobb 04:15

Well, I'm sure he will be thrilled to know that, especially because it sounds like it's going to be a perfect fit for him. So and that's what like, what that's what we always want to find out, right is Jason also, when I can get him to read a book, it's almost always something I chose for him. But I have to pick exactly what's going to be perfect or else because he will DNF so fast and just walk away and be like I'm never reading again.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:36

Right, right. Yeah, you have to be very careful.

Kaytee Cobb 04:38

I have to be so careful. Yeah. And knowing those intersections and where we overlap, and where I can go for good recommendations outside of where we overlap is key. So exactly, I think that's a good bookish moment.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:49

Knowing who the right book twin is, is very useful.

Kaytee Cobb 04:53

Definitely. All right, I like that. My bookish moment this week is a little a little bit more sweeter, more saccharin. I guess this week was birthday crush week at our house. We have podcast crush week in June. But here in August, we have birthday crush week. Two of our four kiddos were born just one day apart. And that means sometimes it's hard to make both birthdays distinct and special, but not this year. Because we have a family tradition that makes it easy to make a five year old birthday party really special or a birthday, we didn't do a party. Noah, our third kid out got his own wallet with a little bit of cash in it, which he will use because he'll start getting his allowance, right. But the wallet means he has somewhere special to put his very own library card. So we packed up the family on Wednesday morning, scooted over to the library and got him all signed up. He was so proud. His eyes were just completely sparkling that up to be able to like scan it at the machine. He's very excited to put holds on things even though he doesn't even know what he wants. Like, he's just thrilled to be so grown up and to have his own library card. So and he tucked it in his wallet as soon as he got it. So he was just very excited.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:02

That is so sweet. What a big boy to have his own wallet and his own library card.

Kaytee Cobb 06:08

I know that's a spider man wallet, which of course he's very happy about.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:12

Yeah, no, that's perfect. I love that. What a great tradition. That's wonderful.

Kaytee Cobb 06:16

Yeah, I think five years. I mean, that's when we start doing allowance in our house, they get the number of dollars old they are every month. And so it's like, you know, you need something to put in this wallet. So we're gonna go ahead and make sure you've got something there. It's not like they have a driver's license. Right. So right. It's just a fun tradition.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:32

It's excellent. I love that.

Kaytee Cobb 06:34

Okay, let's do some current reads. Meredith, what have you been reading months ago?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:39

No. All right. Well, it's Yeah, it's not not months ago. So luckily, we're getting we're sort of collapsing down the timeline. So now this is just a few weeks ago that I that I read these books, I have three very, very different books that I'm bringing. But I'm really happy to be talking about all three of them today,

because these were all ones that I liked. They appealed to all my different kinds of readerly inclinations, right? We contain multitudes. These books are going to show you that this first book falls squarely into the camp of sometimes Meredith brings a book that is just really weird. And I haven't read a book that is as weird since I read *The Library At Mount Char*. This one is really, really strange, but good in its own way. This is *Rules for Vanishing* by Kate Alice Marshall. And I don't think this is going to be on a lot of people's radar because I just have not seen it really anywhere. And so when I picked it up at the library out of bookish serendipity, right, because this is what I do. When I go to the library, I want to encourage all you all of you to do it, take a bunch of books out and give them a try. You never know when something's gonna hit. This is one of those that I found that way. So here's the setup. In the full documentary style of *The Blair Witch Project*, comes the campfire story of a missing girl, a vengeful ghost, and the girl who is determined to find her sister, no matter what it costs her. So once a year, a road opens up in a forest. And at the end of it, the ghost of Lucy Gallows beckons anyone who dares to go on that road. Lucy's game is not for the faint of heart. If you win, you get to escape with your life. But if you lose, you lose it all. So Sarah, our lead character, her sister, disappeared a year ago. And only Sarah knows where she is. Her sister was Becca and Becca went to find the ghost of Lucy Gallows, and she's trapped on the road that leads to her in the sleepy town of Briar Glen. Lucy's road is nothing more than local myth, local legend. But Sarah knows that it's real, and she has to go down that road to find her sister. So when Sarah and her skeptical friends meet in the forest to search for Becca, the mysterious road appears and unfurls itself for them, all they have to do is walk down it. But the path to Lucy is not of this world and it has a lot of rules. Every mistake means new horrors could come from any direction. There are vengeful spirits, broken, angry creatures that are just waiting for you to slip on one of those rules, and no one is guaranteed to make it home. The only certainty is the road has a toll and it will be paid. Oh my gosh, this book has a great setup. It has a really really great setup for sure. And I I really liked it so this is why a ghost horror, Okay?

Kaytee Cobb 09:54

Okay.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:54

It is not for HSPs it is not for young teens. I would not hand this book to Jackson, who's turning 10. So I want to be super clear about who this book is for. It's for older teens to adults, right? It came out a couple of years ago. And I would think with the premise, it's kind of as juicy as that one that it would have been, it would have garnered more buzz, but demitted just really didn't, I could find very few people who've read it on Instagram. But I read it in just a day and a half. And I was definitely interested in it all the way through. And it was one of those books where I wanted to set all my chores aside to read it. So there's that. But it is definitely weird. And there was a lot. It's, it's very, very intricately plotted, which I like, but it veers over the edge into sometimes becoming confused. So there's intricately plotted smart, and then there's Yeah, I'm trying too hard. And it's confusing. And sometimes in the middle, it veered over in that line, some of the things that set up came to a logical, satisfying conclusion. Other things I sort of was like, Hmm, that's a plot hole that wasn't completely worked out the way that it should have been. But I would definitely recommend this to anyone who really loves a puzzle, or a ghost story that you have to pay a lot of attention to, because there's definitely something to be said for that in this book. But the comparison made at the beginning of that of the marketing material to *The Blair Witch Project* does NOT land, it's nowhere near as creepy. It's definitely creepy in places, but it doesn't hit the

level of creepy that I think The Blair Witch Project did. So I want to be careful about that comparison being made. It has definite horror elements, and it gets pretty violent and weird. Again, I want to say all the triggers. So let's be very careful there. And it has plenty of teenage angst because we're following a group of teenagers who are going on this kind of quest. But that piece of it actually, there was never so much angst that it got in the way of enjoying the book. What I will say is that it has it's one of these books that we're seeing them in the last few years that has like the mixed source style. So we've got like, pieces of podcast, pieces of interview, newspaper clippings, like those kinds of things interspersed. And I really liked that as a way of telling this particular story that was in fact, without that, I might not have been as interested. But that really, really kept propelling me through the story. So I thought a lot about who I would recommend this to and I think what I've arrived at is that it would be a great book to put into the hands of your older teenagers who say that they're not ready for Stephen King, but they're well past the RL Stine level of things, right. I think this would slot really well in with that particular group. There's a lot to think about and a lot to talk about in this book. So this is the Rules for Vanishing by Kate Alice Marshall.

Kaytee Cobb 13:08

Okay, is it weird that while you were describing it, I was picturing the yellow brick road, but like gone really dark? Yeah, like rusted and decayed,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 13:16

Right. It's definitely, you for sure could see like Wizard of Oz in the upside down.

Kaytee Cobb 13:22

Okay, got it. The perfect description. Yeah, exactly where my head was.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 13:27

Yeah, it's very, it's very creepy. ghostly very atmospheric.

Kaytee Cobb 13:31

Okay, well, that sounds good. And I will have like a little tie in here. Micah picks up RL Stine books at the library when we were there for Noah's library card on Wednesday. And he really wanted to make sure that he was reading them in order. So I thought you would be really proud of him Meredith. Even though I told him, You don't, You don't have to read Goosebumps in order. But uh, you can just pick up whichever one you find. And he was like, Where is book one?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 13:54

Micah is not an animal.

Kaytee Cobb 13:57

We are not animals in this family. It was. Okay, we're gonna take a turn still go on a journey, though. So today, I'm going to do something a little different. I've never done this before. We've never done this before. But I want to highlight some incredible books from the Indie Press List that we've had for our Patrons. So all three of my choices today are from the Indie Press List. Okay, well, I've read many from those lists. These are three that I feel relatively confident that Meredith is not reading so she will not be

bringing them to the show. So that's how I chose the three that I'm bringing today. So first up, is *The Ride of Her Life* by Elizabeth Letts. This was a pick from Fabled in Waco, Texas, one of our beloved indie bookstores, and it's written by the same author as *Finding Dorothy* which both of us read and loved in 2019 ish. I want to say this one is more in her wheelhouse than that one is, than *Finding Dorothy* was even though I didn't know it at the time. So it turns out most of Elizabeth Letts other books are about horses. And this one is too. *The Ride of Her Life*, we meet Annie Wilkins, who is 63 years old, living alone in Maine and is about to lose her farm due to back taxes when she is diagnosed with pneumonia. That's the final straw for her. She's told to take it easy, but really feels like this might be the last chance she has for adventure. So she buys an old horse called Tarzan, and hitches up her dog Depeche Toi, to his saddle horn, and decides she wants to see the Pacific Ocean. This is a true story that takes place in 1954. So she is leaving home, having sold the farm to pay her debts, and has only a map of Maine to get her started to go all the way across the country. This is true to life adventure of the birth of the beloved curmudgeon kind you guys. It's a beloved curmudgeon on a real life adventure. How cool is that? Annie takes no ish from anyone. She is feisty and strong and smart and someone you have to root for. I will tell you because I hate being blindsided by stuff like this. There is a sad moment in this book, it has animals on the cover. And for those of you who read books with animals on the cover, you know that sometimes that does not end well. Right. There's an animal in peril, that will break your heart as a reader. I will not spoil this for you. But I will say that you reader will love all of these characters, all three of them until the end. That's as much as I can dance around that issue. But if anybody is really, really worried, like, I don't think I can handle this book, if such and such happens, send me a message. And I am happy to not spoil it for the general audience, but tell you exactly what you may or may not be worried about. I just don't want to reveal stuff to everyone. So know that that's available to you. Annie is like hashtag goals for old age like I like in in 30 years, I want to be Annie Wilkins. They called her "Jackass Annie" in her hometown. And I like I want to live to that moniker and kind of, you know, live up to that name. I loved reading her story. This one is not quite as fast paced, as you may expect, but it was excellent, well researched and wonderful the whole way through. So that one is *The Ride of Her Life* by Elizabeth Letts.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:16

Oh, I love that when I actually got quite a bit into that book and was really, really, really enjoying it. I moved off of it just to make sure I got through, you know all of them from that month. But yeah, that that was one I'm very interested in. It's a good choice.

Kaytee Cobb 17:30

It's a fun one.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:32

All right. So my next book that I want to talk about is one that we definitely have seen lots and lots of places. And I was thinking maybe I wouldn't bring it to the show just because we have seen it everywhere. But then a lot of people in our reader survey said, Please bring books to the show, even if we've seen it everywhere because we want to know kind of what your particular taste is. We can match it to our own. So this is *When the Stars Go Dark* by Paula McClain. Did you read this one?

Kaytee Cobb 17:59

No, not yet. I have it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 18:01

Right. So this one is a recommend. It was a recommendation for me from Elizabeth from Fabled, not a part of the Indie Press List, but also, you know, in her recommendation to me personally. And so here's the setup of this of this mystery. Our lead character is Anna Hart. And she's a detective in San Francisco and she has a really specific talent and that is finding missing people. When tragedy strikes in her own personal life, Anna decides to leave San Francisco and go to the Northern California, the very North Northern California town of Mendocino right on the coast, to try to kind of put herself back together. She lived there as a child with her beloved foster parents. And now she's thinking that it might be the only place where she can kind of find enough peace to put herself back together. But as so often happens to these poor detectives, when they try to take some time off the day, she arrives in Mundo Mendocino, she learns that a local teenage girl has gone missing. So this crime very much unnerved Anna because it's reminiscent of an unsolved murder of a girl who went missing when she was growing up in Mendocino. And as Anna becomes obsessed with saving this missing girl, she's forced both to reckon with a murderer and with her very complicated past. You guys, I loved this book. This book is right in there in my mystery wheelhouse because this is the literary mystery, right? This is the smart literary mystery. We talk over and over again about the fact that we want more of these kinds of books right so Paul McLain has done a fantastic job here. I like I said, I wasn't gonna necessarily bring into the show. I wasn't sure I was 100% in the mood for it. But then I listened to Sarah from Sarah's Bookshelves live interview Paula McLain on her show. And as almost always happens when Sarah interviews an author, I've, all of a sudden, I'm interested in the book in a totally new way. Because she brings out things from the author about how and why, you know, the process the you know, the different data sources, the research, the personal things, the things in their personal lives that they bring to their, to the books that they've written that just all of a sudden made me really want to read the book. And I will say, I think my reading was so much better because I listened to that first. It really, that interview really informed my reading. So I want to encourage you, if you've been waiting to read *When the Stars Go Dark*, I think you should read it, go listen to that interview first, for sure. So this literary mystery, it has a great setting of the setting of Mendocino, it's on the northern California coast. Johnny and I love to visit Mendocino. So it's an area that I've been, you know, many, many times. It's absolutely beautiful, really rugged, rugged coastline, which is my favorite part of California is the really rugged Northern California coast. This book is also set in the 90s, which as a teenager in the 90s, this was very much, you know, nostalgic for me in a lot of ways. Also, mysteries, oftentimes, were being set in the 90s because we didn't have cell phones, and it makes mysteries more interesting. Before we had a cell phone. You know, it's hard to murder someone these days. So the other thing is, yeah, Thank heaven, right. So the other thing is that Paul McLain works in several different true life, crime stories into the plot of her fictional story, including the Polly Klaas murder, which was a real life story that happened. That absolutely freaked me the EFF out because Polly Klaas was 13 when she was kidnapped from her home, in the middle of a sleepover in front of other children, like she was there with friends. And the guy came in, grabbed her, took her, killed her. Her parents were in the house. Her friends weren't in the rooms,

Kaytee Cobb 22:08

right? It's like, really terrifying.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 22:10

Yeah, no, that's what I'm saying is it freaks me out. I mean, it's, uh, you know, and so she, Paul McClain works in some of these true life cases into the actual narrative, which made it really, really interesting. I liked those elements. Now, if you read reviews of any of what I will describe as smart literary mysteries, they the reviews are going to do what they always do. They complain that it's too complex. And it wraps in too many storylines, and there's too much character development. The fact is these people who are whining in this way, they're going into these books wanting something more in the line of a thriller. And they're not getting that with a smart literary mystery. That's not what you're getting. You're getting more character development, you're getting a deeper, more complicated plotline. So that always irritates me when I when I read that, because I'm like, come on what this is what makes the book great. So this is not a thriller. The author expects you to have some patience and the ability to keep a few things separate in your brain. It's not a book to read when you're tired or sad, because really difficult things happen in this book. But when you're in a good place, and you're ready to take on something that's got a lot of layers and a lot of layered characters. I think this book is really well done. I highly recommend it. So this is *When the Stars Go Dark* by Paula McClain.

Kaytee Cobb 23:30

That sounds excellent. And I love that it had such a strong sense of place that pulled you straight there that like a way a way that you already knew it. But brought it right back to life for you. I think that's so great. However, I don't want to hear anything else about Polly Klaas. That sounds terrifying.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 23:47

It's awful. It's terrible.

Kaytee Cobb 23:49

Did they catch him?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 23:51

Yes, yeah, they caught they caught him.

Kaytee Cobb 23:52

Well, that makes me feel better. But I don't like that at all.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 23:54

Well, and then her father went on to become a major advocate for missing and and murdered children and has gotten multiple pieces of important legislation passed that have made it, you know, just really, really been helpful. So her father has taken a very tragic situation and his name is Mark Klaas, and really used it for the most good possible. He's such an inspiring man. He really he really, really is. So yeah, this case was very, like it hit me hard when this happened. Yeah.

Kaytee Cobb 24:28

Wow. Okay, we're taking a left turn. We're going like up and frothy. So I'm going to talk about our second Indie Press List book for this episode is *Written in the Stars* by Alexandria Bella floor. Meredith, I'm like twirling my hair. This this is a hair twirling book. Okay, our main characters here are Darcy and Elle. And if Darcy always makes you think of *Pride and Prejudice*, that's intentional. This is an LGBT romance with many subtle nods to P&P and I adore it. We're going to call it P&P. Because you know, Jane Austen and I we're like besties. Darcy is an insurance actuary. She loves numbers and statistics and spreadsheets and putting things in their place. She's a type one to her very core. She's analytical and punctual. And exactly the opposite of Elle. Elle is a pantsner. As Gretchen Rubin calls them, a fly by the seat of her pants, astrologer, she's social media famous. She's up for anything and she's chill to a fault. They are complete opposites. This is apparent from their very first blind date set up by Darcy's brother, who is also Elle's new business partner. Elle arrives late, spills her wine on Darcy, and then bails in embarrassment. Which is why it's so surprising that the next time they see each other, she's roped into a fake dating scheme designed to keep their families off their backs. When are you going to get married? When are you going to settle down? How come you won't let me set you up on dates. They set this up to get their families off their backs. Since I already told you that this is a romance, you know where it goes from there. This book toes the line between opposites attract, and enemies to lovers and I'm totally here for it. Last week, I brought *The Ex Talk* to the show. And I mentioned it was slow to start. If that book was a crockpot, slowly warming up to temperature, this book is an oven broiler, don't get too close, or you're gonna get burned. And it's gonna happen fast. Because the sparks are there, they start flying quickly, I would consider this one pretty open door during the bedroom scene. So definitely know that going in. And you should also know that patrons heard behind the scenes blushy content about why I like this type of romance so much. But again, that's behind a paid wall because the entire internet does not need to know about that. So this one was a pick from *Novel Neighbor* in Missouri for the month of August. And I thought it was a great pick. And I loved it from beginning to end. It's *Written in the Stars* by Alexandria Bellefleur. And I was sure that Meredith was not going to bring this on to the show either.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 27:02

This was definitely not going to be one that I brought to the show, but one that when we talked about the Indie Press List, as we as we kind of looked over those choices, I knew that this is going to be a one that was going to hit with a lot of people just not my particular thing. But actually the next book I want to talk about leads perfectly from that because I wanted to bring a light frothy romance to I read when I don't read a lot of romance. But every once in a while I really get in the mood for you know a very light romance and this one was one that I read on my trip to Hawaii and it was perfect vacation reading. So this is right this is *Romancing the Duke* by Tessa Dare. So Tessa Dare is my go to for romance. I absolutely love the way that she writes her the way that she writes her books. And because Yeah, because I had two really heavy books before I wanted to bring something a little bit lighter. So here's the setup for this one, as the daughter of a very, very famous author is Isolde Ophelia. Goodnight, get a load of that name, Izzy for short, grew up on tales of brave knights and fair maidens. But things have definitely not gone for Izzy the way that she expected. Her father is gone, and her fortunes have definitely changed. And at this point Izzy's given up on traditional romance. She really at this point just needs shelter like a roof over her head. So when she is summoned to a decrepit mansion for a meeting with a strange attorney who tells her against all odds, she has inherited said decrepit

mansion. She can't believe her luck. She's totally over the moon. There's just one catch. Kaytee, I know you're never going to be able to guess what this catch is?

Kaytee Cobb 28:50

Well, I can because I read this one. But I'm excited for you to tell us.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:54

Inside said decrepit mansion is a handsome, wounded, cranky Duke, who has not been told that his mansion has been sold from out from under him. And he is not leaving easily. But neither is Izzy. So I ask you guys, what do you think is going to happen from there? What could possibly happen from there? Oh, I love Tessa Dare. She just is 100% for me. I just I absolutely love her. Do her books have a formula? Yes they do. Do I care? I do not. When I'm in the mood for this. I don't know. There's lots of times where I wouldn't want something that's formulaic. But in that particular mood, nothing else does it for me like Tessa, Tessa Dare. As I said, this was a great book for me to read when my best friend and I went to Hawaii. We had lots of time to read. And one of the most fun things that we did is as I was reading I she was reading her own book, but I would sort of keep her abreast of the plot as it was going on. And I kept saying Well, here's what's going on, what happened next. And then I would read to her when it actually happened. And we just thought this was delightfully hilarious that I can predict exactly what was going to happen next. But really, for me, I love that predictability here. Sometimes I just absolutely crave it. And I seek these particular books out for just this reason. Now, also, I will say because they are this predictable, I don't read them back to back to back. I don't read them over and over again, I probably read one every 18 months. That's about right for me, because it keeps it really fresh and it keeps it just a really sweet treat. So if you love saucy, spicy, open door historical romance cuz that's what this is. I just think you can't do better than Tessa Dare. So this is Romancing the Duke by Tessa Dare.

Kaytee Cobb 30:47

One of my favorite little nuggets from that one was the like Victorian Age LARPer's that were like, really in love with Izzy Goodnight's dad. Dad's lit that he had written. They were just like, in love with her and they would dress up as the characters from the book and I just I love that so much.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 31:07

Yeah, they were definitely a roaming band of weirdos, weren't they? For sure. Very interesting.

Kaytee Cobb 31:13

Oh, man. That was that was a fun one. I love the way that one ended. Without spoiling anything. I just like it was fun. Okay, my third Indie Press List book for this episode is The Sweet Taste of Muscadines by Pamela Terry. And this book has officially taken over the top spot as my favorite Southern family drama. So cue the trumpets and the horns and the drums or whatever you do for that. That's a big shoe to fill. Because I also love Joshilyn Jackson, whose name is hard to say, but this one oh man, I just loved it so much. It's so incredible. So at the outset of this story, we find Geneva Breedlove dead in the muscadine arbor - little note for the audio here after we recorded that episode of the Indie Press List, we had both said musca-deen over and over and over again. Yep, yep, I'm not Southern. I have no dog in this fight. But the but the Bookish Friends, they were divided on whether it's pronounced musca-dine

or musca-deen. I'm going to go with the way the audiobook narrator said muscadine so I'm gonna honor that. So we find Geneva, she's dead in the muscadine arbor. Her children are Lila, Henry and Abigail. They come together afterwards, to sort out her estate and her funeral and to mourn her and to try and figure out what the heck she was doing out there with the muscadines and a spoon. Lila and Henry have both left Wesleyan, Georgia, their hometown to forge their own paths while Abigail stayed behind to dote on their mother. The siblings have to work through their differences and their dynamic is really wonderful. In this book, it felt very true to life to me, my sibling, and I and my in laws, and I have all brought our own strong personalities and drama to our relationships in our lives. And Pamela Terry does a really great job depicting that on the page. The way this story unfolds is really lovely and revealing. And I found myself rooting not just for the three main siblings, but the generation above them, as we unpack their family drama and their history. This is in the tradition of other books that we would call like sitting shivah books or deathbed books that that we've read, like we just recently talked about All This Could Be Yours by Jami Attenburg, but with much more likable characters, which is exactly what I was hoping for. When I set it up on the Indie Press List episode, it delivered on every level for me, I gave it five stars. It was a huge hit. This was a Fabled pick for the Indie Press List in July, and I loved it. It was The Sweet Taste of Muscadines by Pamela Terry.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 33:49

Yeah, it's another one that I just it's so so that just sucked me right in. It's a really, really good one. And a lot of people, when they got that ...

Kaytee Cobb 33:57

They're loving it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 33:58

They loved it and said, You know, like, top 10 of the year for them for sure. Yeah, that one was a really big hit. And one of those books that just wasn't getting a lot of buzz on on bookstagram until we started bringing it to the forefront from from doing the Indie Press List. So those That's good stuff. good choices, Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 34:16

Yeah, I just really wanted to take a minute. And you know, we're not doing like a Patreon ad this show, but just talk about why the Indie Press List is so fantastic. And getting to highlight some of the titles that I really loved. Even just really recently from that selection of books, it has been really fun. So, okay, those were six current reads and two, including two open door romances, which may be a record for the two of us, for sure. And now we get to move along to our deep dive today. The "Literary Hall Pass". Did you did you know immediately who you wanted to talk about when you when you saw this deep dive topic?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:52

Right, so my thought was so yes, to answer that question. Yes, I did. And I asked Johnny and he immediately knew too. He knew mine, which is interesting. Oh, but we so we're going to talk about our literary hall pass right, which is the literary character with whom we would like to spend some sessi time. Okay, so that there's that, but we're also going to expand it a little bit and talk about maybe some

characters or authors that we would maybe want to be our BFF we would be friends with in real life, or maybe an author crush or to like a real life person that we kind of think is really, really awesome.

Kaytee Cobb 35:32

In a way it might be bad if we met them in real life, because almost stupid stalkery

Meredith Monday Schwartz 35:37

way exactly right. Okay. All right. So yes, so those were the things that I was thinking about. So my, the numbers I have a few in the in the category of literary characters who would be my hall pass, but the number one for me is Edmund Dante is from The Count of Monte Cristo, because he is just the ultimate... Now, he's very young at the beginning of the story. Yeah, but he ages as we go through and so that makes it okay, but he is just, you know, my sweet spot is the kind of wounded damaged, edgy, cranky for a good reason. hot guy, that's my that that's what's gonna put someone, someone on my list and Edmund Dante is, is he's that to a T as we go through the book. He's not that to start the book, which is part of what makes it so great. He's running sort of bright eyed and innocent and earnest. But then he turns into something else over the course of the book.

Kaytee Cobb 36:39

Yeah, and you like that little bit of darker edge right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 36:42

100% I wouldn't touch him with a 10 foot pole at the beginning. Yuck. Boring.

Kaytee Cobb 36:46

That was when he was a puppy, yeah.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 36:48

Not at all interested in that.

Kaytee Cobb 36:50

Okay. Well, my my character that came to mind immediately. Unfortunately, a lot of other people feel the same. And it's Jamie from Outlander. I just cannot with him, like I just want to get under that kilt ladies and gentlemen, it's it's a problem. The Scottish accent, the tartan plaid, the big, you know, muscles, the long red hair. I just, and I'm not normally a redheaded junkie, but, man Jamie can get it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:19

Yeah, he's on, he's on my list too. And you know who else? So Jamie is on my list... Four he's fourth down on my list. Okay, but second on my list who, who I think you're thinking of Kaytee is Rhysand from A Court of Mist and Fury. Oh, my God, that

Kaytee Cobb 37:39

yes. Yes, there's only one fantasy creature on my list and it's definitely Rhysand.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:44

There's only one guy with wings. And the fact that he can fly and do other things at the same time. I mean, come on.

Kaytee Cobb 37:53

I'd give up my firstborn. Maybe my second. I mean,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:57

I give up all four of them, all four of them out the door.

Kaytee Cobb 38:02

Yeah, yeah. It's a problem.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:04

So he was on... He was on your list too?

Kaytee Cobb 38:06

For sure. Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:08

And the bookish, the bookish friends, there were a lot of people who were who talked about him for sure. But yeah, he's that super hot guy who also is evil. But then there are layers and that I think you put all of that together and it just makes for its that's a that's a tempting package.

Kaytee Cobb 38:30

Yeah. It's like salty and sweet mix together like that. Or like spicy and sweet. Maybe?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:35

Yeah. Yeah.

Kaytee Cobb 38:37

I do crush on characters quite a bit in the moment. But I couldn't come up with that many in this little deep dive. Although I did see a comment. Somebody said that their literary crush is Armand Gamache. And unfortunately, I have to say to you, my dear friend, you are wrong. Jean-Guy is the literary crush from the Three Pines here. So well. I love his brokenness. So I mean, she can have Armand, I'm not she's not wrong. I'm happy to take Jean-Guy off her hands is what I'm saying here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:06

Right? Exactly. She might very well be 25 years older than you are. And so she might be having that situation. Now. I have Armand Gamache because when I started having fun with this, and I started making like a literary family for myself, and Armand Gamache would be my number one pick for my dad like that. That would be my literary dad that I would choose. And for my uncle, I'm choosing Hercule Poirot because I don't want to date him. I call him my boyfriend, because I just really, really like him. But I don't want sassy time with him because he's little and quite quite a bit older. Which is not to say that

that can't be great, but it's just not my style. But I would love to be my uncle. So I could sort of call him in if I ever got into a spot like someone was accusing me of poisoning somebody.

Kaytee Cobb 39:51

Yeah, yeah. And he could help you out and you'd have him just in your in your contacts.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:56

Right. And for my mom, I chose Reine-Marie Gamache so it's perfect. So Armand and Reine-Marie they're two I want as my parents.

Kaytee Cobb 40:05

Excellent. I like that a lot. What about are those all four of your of your picks?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 40:14

Right so basically well no so my net my number three is Grey from A Curse So Dark and Lonely, especially since The Lazy Genius cast him as Rege-Jean Page, which is just like, Are you kidding me? Now I like it. I've already loved Grey from that series. Now I just love him even more. So basically what I realized is pretty much any cranky Duke with a heart of gold, or any cranky detective who's well built and wounded. Like Jackson Brodie from the Kate Atkinson. I just talked about Jackson Brodie in the All Things Murderful. And I absolutely love him. And then also Sherlock Holmes, I have a thing. So that that rounds out My Sassy Time list.

Kaytee Cobb 40:57

I like that. You have a longer list than I do Meredith. I will say I didn't have as hard a time. Okay, well, that's not true. I found myself googling hot authors this week, which don't do that. You guys. It's not useful, because you know what they say? These authors are topping the New York Times bestsellers list. Oh, that's not what I want to know. I want to know the ones that are sexy. Right? Wrong. Google, you failed me. But off the top of my head. I knew as soon as I saw this, I knew the immediate answer for me for an author was Jason Reynolds. I love that man. His gorgeous brain mixed with his gorgeous face and his amazing writing. He could I mean, he I love him. Yeah. I'm gonna embarrass myself if I keep talking about Jason Reynolds. So I'm just gonna cut it off as I love him. Yeah, that's all you need to know.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 41:50

Well, so that doesn't surprise me because I think that that sounds like a perfect like, that totally resonates with me for you. Up till a few months ago, I'm not sure I would have necessarily had this in spades. But I have fallen so deeply in love with Amor Towles like, in love with him. The amount of time that I have spent watching any video that I could watch of him giving any talk that I could possibly find is creepy with a capital creep. Like, seriously, it's, it's really, really bad. I mean, Johnny was like, What is with you? And I'm like, I don't know. I'm like, obsessed with him. I'm like, looking at all of his past stuff. And all of his Twitter, like everything. I mean, like, I just went totally nuts with him. He is the person for me. Who I, you know, like we just got offered to be able to interview him. And I was like, Kaytee I don't think that I could do that. Because I I just don't I think I would just make an idiot. I don't think I would

want to meet him in person at an author event. I think I would just be a puddle. I don't, I would just embarrass myself so completely.

Kaytee Cobb 43:05

We do have Bookish Friends that are like machinating behind the scenes... is that a verb? Can I make that a verb, that are like, "are you going to make this happen for her? Kaytee, you need to get Meredith and Amor Towles in the same room". And I was like, I don't I don't know if that'll work. I don't I just don't. I'm fine from COVID. I just don't know if it'll work.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:22

I mean, like literally in the same room or like zoom?

Kaytee Cobb 43:25

No. Yeah, no. in the same room is the request.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:28

What can you hire him on cameo? I mean, what are you how do you do that?

Kaytee Cobb 43:32

I don't know, author event, I assume?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:35

Yeah, see, I just feel like I would just be a blithering idiot. I feel like I would, I would regret every day for the rest of my life. Having met him in that way, because I just wouldn't be my best self. My only hope is that at some point, somehow he listens to that one little bit of me talking about A Gentleman in Moscow on our podcast, and I don't know how to make that happen.

Kaytee Cobb 43:56

That would be the the pinnacle for you. That's enough.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:59

Yes. If he, if he DMed me saying that he heard me talk about the book on the show, I would just be over the moon.

Kaytee Cobb 44:08

I love that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:09

I love that because I love him. I'm, I'm in love with him.

Kaytee Cobb 44:14

I know. I know. It's okay. It's okay. Okay, so I have I have one more. And he I just I wouldn't kick Frederik Backman out of my bed is all I'm saying about him. He's very, like, standard white guy dadbod. But he's funny on social media, and he's like, kind of glaringly honest. He'll talk about anxiety and

depression and, and he's just adorable. And I love the characters he writes. And I just, I mean, we haven't gotten to talk to him either. But I don't know if I could handle it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:47

Right. It might fall into the category of like, What What if he's not everything that you that you want? Which is that scary part of it. Well, maybe he falls into the category for you have kind of friends that you'd like to have, like a person you'd like to be friends with him in real life, because you know who I want as my BFF in real life, it's not going to surprise you, but it's Sally Hepworth. I want to be best friends with her. I felt like I feel like we would get along famous.

Kaytee Cobb 45:13

I think so too. Yeah, I think you want to I want to be best friends with Luvvie Ajayi Jones. She went on a tirade this past week about people not washing themselves appropriately on social media, like not knowing how often they should use a washcloth and things. And I I'm, you know, talking to you guys from my coffin right now, because she actually killed me, like, I just want to hang out with her and grab a drink, and laugh until I maybe like have to wipe the seat up afterwards because she is so funny. And I just want to hang out with her. She's so great. And the same with Steven Rowley. I, I have like my little cadre of gay boys, you know, I have my my gay bestie, I think he would fit in great with us. And we could all three of us go out together and have a great time. And I just like Steven, if you want to be friends, I'm here for you. So just send me a message and we'll figure it out. If you ever come to Santa Fe.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:04

Well, I was thinking along those same lines, of course, I would absolutely love to have a drink with David Sedaris because I mean, who could possibly not be delighted by you know what I mean? I don't want to like... nothing formal just something super laid back and chill. Just to just let him not feel like he's being performative. Just be his his real organic self. I just think that would be the absolute best, you know, whilst I think would be great, and just like a chilled dinner situation, is another one. Those people that I really do want to be friends with in real life. And that's Jen Hatmaker. I kind of have a major girl crush on her. I really love her books. She lives in Austin. I'm just saying that it's not

Kaytee Cobb 46:48

If you HAD to run into each other,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:50

for me to run into her at some point and for us to become best friends who talk all the time. Yeah.

Kaytee Cobb 46:56

I agree. I think I think she would be amazing. Alright, that was our deep dive. And now we get to press books into your hands, just like we just pressed gorgeous faces into your hands.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:06

Yes. And we are going to stay with the sexy time because apparently this was the mood I was in when I was preparing for you.

Kaytee Cobb 47:13

I'm excited.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:14

Yeah, no, for me, we definitely are. So yes, I'm going to put on the press list because I really, really I feel like we need more romance on the press list. And we need Tessa Dare on the on the on the press list, which she's not there. I'm going to press *The Duchess Deal*, which is by Tessa Dare, and she is my this is my favorite, favorite favorite of hers. So this is again, there's a formula to these books. So if you weren't interested in when I talked about *Romancing the Duke*, just, you know, for fast forward me until you get to Kaytee's press, because this is not going to interest you either. But just you know, give me give me a little bit of ability to put them put this on the press list here. So here's the setup for *The Duchess Deal*. So since his return from the war, the Duke of Asbury his to do list has been short and anything but sweet. He basically spends all his time, brooding, glowering, and menacing London's ne'er-do-wells by night. He's sort of like Batman. Yeah, yes. But now, there is a new item on his to do list. He needs an heir, which means he needs a wife and the Duke, this Duke is not interested in dating. He just does not have the patience for it. So as he's thinking this one day, Emma Gladstone, a vicar's daughter turned seamstress, suddenly out of the row out of the out of the blue appears in his library wearing a wedding gown. There's a good excuse for this. And he decides on the spot that she will do. But here are his rules. They will be husband and wife by night only. There will be no lights and no kissing. And there will be absolutely no questions about his battle scars. Lastly, and most importantly, once she gets pregnant with his heir, they need to never share a bed again. But Emma is no pushover. So again, you can bet where this is going, oh my gosh. When I read this one, I had not read a true bodice ripping romance in like 20 years. So this really was kind of my re-entry into this kind of thing. By the way, I highly recommend these on ebook just because the covers are really cheesy. They're mostly found in mass market paperbacks, which is awful. And they're really most of the time on good deal on Kindle like \$1.99 or 2.99. So just get this on your ebook. But this one, the *Duchess Deal* is so dang good. It's kind of like *Beauty and the Beast*, but there's a ton of sex. Really, really good sex, but please know that it is absolutely there. The story was just what you'd expect from a romance. There's two likeable characters who you really want to get together. But there's all of these hiccups, keeping them apart. And I'll add, and I will add the in my book journal. This is an actual line from my book journal. I said Poor Johnny. I'd read this book at night and then just descend upon him like a wild animal, but he loved it. So no sympathy. So there you go. If you're looking

Kaytee Cobb 50:23

NOT poor Johnny.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 50:24

for some energy in your life, get you some *Duchess Deal* by Tessa Dare.

Kaytee Cobb 50:29

Yeah, lucky, Johnny. That's how that actually goes. Okay, we've had a few left turns on this episode so far. This is the leftist left. Okay, maybe we're going right now. I don't even know where we are. The I'm

doing a non-traditional press. today. I am pressing The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse by Charlie Mackesy.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 50:51

This is the best back to back presses we've ever done.

Kaytee Cobb 51:03

by Charlie Mackesy. You guys, stay with us here. Oh, lordy. Okay. So this I would categorize like an adult picture book and not adult like pornography. Adult like for grownups because it has really sweet and endearing themes in it. That maybe will go over the heads of some children. I have to get it together. Meredith stop!

Meredith Monday Schwartz 51:29

sorry... I feel so dirty that my press is next to this press.

Kaytee Cobb 51:33

No, this happened with Rebecca Hopper and I we did a whole episode about romance. And then she pressed Vegetables in Underwear. And I was like, Whoa, girl. Give me a second. I have a whiplash. Hold on. Okay, okay. I'm good. You can read this whole book from cover to cover in about 15 minutes. It is not long. It's stunning for children, of course, and they will love it. But as an adult, it's like a journey. The drawings are really deceptively simple. I actually brought it with me today, Meredith. So I'm hoping this will help you get yourself under control. There's a page in here that will speak to every person. It might, I might someday do a little reel or something pairing a page for each enneagram. But for now, I've only picked two for the two of us. So Meredith, this is your page.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:22

Note for the audio. She's finding my page

Kaytee Cobb 52:25

I'm tearing my post it note out. So it has this beautiful picture with the boy sitting on a horse and the fox next to it says, What is the bravest thing you've ever said? asked the boy. Help said the horse. And sometimes...

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:39

Oh,

Kaytee Cobb 52:39

I know. See that enneagram One reaction? It's hard to ask for help.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:43

Yep.

Kaytee Cobb 52:45

All right, there's my next post it note coming out. So the page I chose for myself is I love this page. It says it's the boy and the mole talking together. It says sometimes I worry, you'll all realize I'm ordinary said the boy. Love doesn't need you to be extraordinary, said the mole. And then it just these beautiful drawings. Get this. I mean, it's just stunning. They're just beautifully done. And it's it's like handwritten text on the page. It's really it's a beautiful gift book or a gift for yourself. And it totally deserves a place on your permanent shelf. So that's how I found it. This week, I was digging through my shelves I decided to move my bookshelves this week. And I picked up my first copy of this at my own local indie Collected Works who was also on the Indie Press List, which is how I'm tying it back to the beginning of this episode. The story is simple and gorgeous. And it urges us to love ourselves and love out from ourselves, love out into the world. And I loved it. It's just a really beautiful story and gorgeously put together. And I would love to press it into your hands. And I hope you enjoyed this little journey we went on together readers. Because we went somewhere today on the press list.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:57

Yeah, we want to press these books into your hands. But after you read mine, you need to wash your hands before you take Kaytee's press.

Kaytee Cobb 54:03

correct. So mine was The Boy, The Mole, The Fox, and The Horse by Charlie Mackesy.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 54:09

All right. Excellent. putting lots of div. We contain multitudes, Kaytee, how we started at the beginning. Okay, 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 54:25

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 54:28

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 in our website at currentlyreadingpodcast.com.

Kaytee Cobb 54:38

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 54:45

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Kaytee Cobb 55:06

Yes, bookish friends are the best friends. All of those things are helping us grow and get closer to our goals. Thanks for doing that, guys.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 55:14

Alright, until next week. Happy reading Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 55:16

Happy reading Meredith