



Season 4, Episode 1: Unexpected Emotions + How We Spent Our Break

Mon, 8/2 • 49:22

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 having strong opinions. So get ready.

Kaytee Cobb 00:25

We are light on the chitchat, heavy on the book talk, and our descriptions will always be spoiler free. We'll discuss our current reads, a bookish deep dive, and then we'll press books into your hands.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:35

I'm Meredith Monday Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas. And talking about books is such a joy in my life.

Kaytee Cobb 00:43

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico. And I am excited for a new season. This is episode number one of season four and we are so glad you're here. Season Four, Meredith,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:57

I can't believe it. We're here.

Kaytee Cobb 00:59

We're here for season four.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:01

I know. I know. It sounds like such big girls, right? season four, it's some big girl.

Kaytee Cobb 01:06

We're like four year olds now almost like that's crazy.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:11

I know. And boy, I was not lying when I said the break that we've just had, has reminded me how much I love talking about books. Because when we're not doing it, it's great to take a break. But it's so much fun to talk about books every week.

Kaytee Cobb 01:25

Yes. Did you find yourself going to people you know, and just being like, hey, do you wanna hear about this book I read lately, because I totally did that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:32

Right, I found myself going to friends of mine and doing that more. I found and found myself having to actually do that a little bit on Instagram in a way that I don't normally do when I haven't talked about a book on the show. I had all this pent up energy. Alright, so we do we are so much looking forward to getting on to season four and to be back behind the mic regularly again. And so we are going to tell you that later on in this episode, our deep dive is going to be how we spent our summer vacation. Right, that makes sense. We had several weeks off. So we had set some intention. We're gonna see how we actually did.

Kaytee Cobb 02:11

Yes, follow up. That's my favorite. My other favorite after setting goals.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 02:16

Exactly. Alright, but before we do that, we are gonna get started the way we always do with our bookish moments of the week. Kaytee, what do you have for us this week?

Kaytee Cobb 02:25

Well, it's been, you know, six or seven weeks since we recorded a bookish moment, or at some some big number. And I thought I was gonna have a hard time narrowing things down. But I took a trip to Philadelphia for our summer break. And I get to meet in real life some of the people who have been ardent, not just listeners, but big supporters of the podcast for years. So I strolled multiple bookstores, which, of course is always a treat. And I got to meet up with Anne Altman, who has been mentioned many times on the show, since she's a great recommender, for you and I right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 02:56

She is yes.

Kaytee Cobb 02:58

And then I also got to meet up with Rachel Kohlbrenner, who I interacted with over zoom before. But together we got to explore Harriet's Bookshop in Philadelphia, which is gorgeous, and I'm so glad I got to see it in person and meet up with a bookish friend. It was like the best of all worlds, it was so great.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:14

I loved seeing those pictures that looked like so much fun. Anytime we get to meet up with a listener, who then becomes an in real life friend, it's really just such a favorite thing. I absolutely love that

Kaytee Cobb 03:26

Very much so.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:27

All right, well, I was going to talk about a different bookish moment of the week when I did my show prep. But just today, I had something happen that is by far my bookish moment of the week. So we've talked a lot about how I use what I call book flights a lot of times to decide what book I'm going to read next, which is a great way of doing that. And I've gotten a lot of questions about it. I think you can probably expect later this season, we'll do a full deep dive on that process. But for now, what I'll say is usually that's a great way for me to choose books. But when I get into a hardcore book slump, which doesn't happen often, but it does happen, right? For whatever reason, usually, because of COVID stress in the past year. That's been my, that's been the thing here, I get in my head, I get up in my feelings. And all of a sudden, it's hard for me to get into a book or even commit to a book that I want to try. Right. So the book flight wasn't working. So I did something yesterday that I have never done before. And I'm not sure I'm ever gonna do it again. But it was an interesting experiment. I said to myself, okay, I it's been six days since I've read any book other than the book that Roxanna and I are currently buddy reading, which is Rules of Civility. And I need to get some other books started. So I'm going to open up Instagram, and I'm going to start scrolling my feed and the first book, that is that is a book review. So not a book stack. Not a you know, but like one book that is being reviewed. The first one that comes up I own or I have in my house right now that I haven't read, that's my next read.

Kaytee Cobb 05:05

This was your seven coming out, Meredith. This is like book roulette, what are you doing?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 05:09

Yeah, it was like me forcing my seven out because I've really been kind of in a place of stress for this last week. So I was like, You know what? I'm just gonna force my seven side to come out. So I scrolled and scrolled. And do you know what book came up?

Kaytee Cobb 05:22

No.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 05:24

There's no way. If you did answer that question, I would flip the freak out. The answer to that question is Survive The Night by Riley Sager. Which has definitely been right. I just got it from Book of the Month. Looking forward to it. Great. Fantastic. Well, spoiler alert, I read it, I read it in one sitting, hated it. I'll talk about it probably weeks and weeks from now, because it's got to come up in my queue. But spoiler alert, I hated it. Big strong feelings. But interesting way to choose book huh? I bet there's gonna be a lot of people who were like, that sounds like a great idea for a way to choose a book. So I think you should try it. Kaytee, I think you should try.

Kaytee Cobb 06:00

I don't think so. I don't think it's a good idea at all. But I'm glad you tried it. Because now I can put it in my head and be like, No, I don't want to do that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:11

Right. I tried to and I do have to say, I think it has moved me out of my book slump, because now I kind of feel very much about very sure about the next book that I want to pick up, because I kind of want to go a very different direction. So I think it helped to get me out of that book slump. Okay. All right. So let's get into the heart of the matter. Kaytee, let's start talking about our current reads. What is your first current read this week?

Kaytee Cobb 06:36

Okay, I'm very excited about my current reads this week. I have some backlist gold for y'all. But first I want to talk about a very buzzy book because you know, I read it over the summer and now I have to tell somebody about it. It's *The Other Black Girl* by Zakiya Dalila Harris.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:50

Yes. I'm so glad you're talking about this Kaytee. I have been on pins and needles about what you were going to think about this book.

Kaytee Cobb 06:56

Oh, I'm excited to tell you about it then. So this title, of course is all over the internet. It's right up my alley, so I had to get my hands on it. I picked up the audio from Libro.fm and it's narrated by four incredible narrators, so that's a great way to take it in. So let's dive in. We've got Nella, the only black employee working at Wagner Books. It's so fun to get a peek inside the very white publishing industry in this novel, she is plagued at work by micro and macro aggressions from her co-workers. her boss, the authors she works with, they're all douche canoes. This She is an editorial assistant who is aiming to be promoted to a full editor. Finally, she's no longer alone at Wagner Books, a new employee shows up, Hazel is hired. She has another Black woman, a friend. Hooray. We can commiserate, we can eat lunch together. She's an ally. But Nella starts getting notes, threatening messages. And she's not sure who's behind them. And she's not sure if Hazel can be trusted at all. This book ratchets up the tension over and over and over again, to the point that I wasn't holding a physical copy. But I found myself gripping my kitchen countertops with white knuckles as I listened. It was like, I cannot stop reading because I have to figure out what happens. It takes a turn though. And the internet is really split about that point in the book. A lot of reviewers are saying I went I went from five stars or four stars to Ooh, maybe three. But for me, even though I was drawn in from the beginning, I also felt that magic sparkle that this author gave us all the way through. And that's all I can tell you without giving up any spoilers about the book. But I'm just gonna say that if anyone feels like picking this one up, go in with both eyes open, pay attention. Keep your wits about you. Because reader whiplash is real. And it's a great, but it was a great experience overall for me. And I gave it four and a half stars. So that was *The Other Black Girl* by Zakiya Dalila Harris.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 08:50

Now see, Kaytee, I thought you were going to convince me I didn't need to read it. Because most of what I've been hearing has been that like, I liked it. And then, meh, but now Oh, I really just want to know what that thing is. So I might at least go in and just like give it a try just to get to that whatever that thing is because I'm so interested in that.

Kaytee Cobb 09:11

Well, I think you as a reader, Meredith, you don't mind as long as it's been foreshadowed in the book, as long as the author isn't saying like, and now here's what we call a red herring. Then I think you're one of those readers that doesn't mind that big like, whoa, wait a minute, what are we doing?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:29

If it meant, right, exactly. If the foundation is there, if the author is smart enough to have kind of let you play to play along, but maybe you just didn't see it. Yeah, absolutely. I can actually love that. If it's like the I'm gonna rip off my rubber face and there's really another face behind it.

Kaytee Cobb 09:44

Like Mission Impossible.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:46

Exactly. Right. Exactly. Okay. All right. Well, you're talking about having some backlist gold that's going to be coming up. I'm going to really hit you with some backlist gold here with my with my first book, because Kaytee I'm going with a book that was written one 100 years ago,

Kaytee Cobb 10:01

Hot damn.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:02

I know. Exactly. My first read this week, my first read of the season, which I kind of like because it feels like it really sets the tone for me is *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* by Agatha Christie. Now, you guys know I love Agatha Christie. I talk about reading her regularly. And this is her very first novel, which it seems like I would have read a long time ago, because I'm not an animal. But with Agatha Christie, I actually really firmly believe that you do not in any way, shape or form have to read in order. They really are smart enough to stand alone. And so I've just hopped all around. But this is our very first one. All you know, the best Agatha Christie novels. The setup for this book is simple. And I think that's part of her genius. So our narrator here is Hastings. He's visiting this once majestic, but now kind of crumbling manor: Styles Court, where he is visiting his friend John Cavendish, who got was terribly wounded in World War One. And he's recuperating, so he's going to visit his friend. And during the early hours of the morning, his friend John's mother suffers convulsions, dies, we quickly realized she was poisoned, done. Well, Hastings, who sort of has dabbled as an amateur detective himself, really, fortuitously realizes that you know who's just staying in a cottage in the very next little village? Hercule Poirot, how fantastic is that? So my boyfriend Hercule can come in and help solve the mystery, right? So yes, this, this is the setup. It's very, very simple. It's not unlike a million other Agatha Christies. The genius, of course, is in the execution. So this is her first one. I loved reading it, because I could really see even in this very first novel, so many of the things that make her books fantastic, a really great cast of characters, the beautiful setting, gorgeous crumbling manor house, lots of intrigue and twisting of mustaches. And what this does have, that many of her succeeding books do not is a super convoluted, sort of resolution to the mystery. So it did not affect my enjoyment of the book. But I just have noticed that the best Agatha Christies have simple setups, and simple resolutions, even if they're not the one that you originally thought. But in this one, whenever Hercule needs 20 pages to do the here's what

happened. It's a little you know, she's gone too far with her with her resolution, right. But again, don't mistake that to mean that I don't think that this isn't is an excellent mystery. I definitely think it's worth your time. She's at her scientific, mathematical mystery, mystery, making best in this novel, for sure. But if you're looking to jump into Christie, if you've always wanted to read her, I wouldn't suggest starting here. This is not my favorite. And again, I don't think that you need to read these in order. So I would suggest that you start with *And Then There Were None*, or *Death on the Nile*. Those were my first two suggestions whenever people say I've always wanted to read Christie, she's so incredibly readable even 100 years later. And I do want to say one more thing, because I call this my Agatha Christie trick. It's something that I do every single time I read one of her books, I read the first two chapters twice. She does so much of her character setting in those first two chapters, the characters, their physical appearances, their mannerisms, their potential motives, come flying at you so quickly, that it's really easy to miss something. I found that if I read them twice, or often what I'll do is I will I like to listen to Agatha Christie. So I'll listen. And then I also will read a physical copy, read those first two chapters, and then I proceed with the rest of the book. It almost always helps really solidify things in my mind, and it helps me guess better at the resolution. So that's just my own trick for reading her books. But it served me well, time and time again. So that is *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* by Agatha Christie. Let's go to your second book of the week. What have you got now?

Kaytee Cobb 14:27

All right. My second book this week is one that I heard about on Book Talk, Etc. on episode number three. They talked about popcorn thrillers, and I decided to pick up *Velocity* by Dean Koontz. I used to devour Dean Koontz books probably 20 years ago when I was probably too young to be reading them. So I decided it was time to pick up another one when I heard this great setup. This one was published in 2005, high backlist and overall, I'd say it holds up. So first, we're gonna meet Bill Wiles. He's a bartender who works at a local bar and a small town. He's leaving work one night, when he finds a note tucked under his windshield wiper. It says, "If you don't take this note to the police and get them involved, I will kill a lovely blonde school teacher. If you do take this note to the police, I will instead kill an elderly woman active in charity work, you have four hours to decide. The choice is yours". And after I heard that setup, I was like, I need to know what happens. So Bill feels like this is probably a hoax. So he toes the line. He goes to a policeman friend outside of work and asks him about it. They agree, let's not do anything. And the next day, a young blonde school teacher is found dead. Uh Oh, right? So another note shows up. And Bill has to make a decision, while another life hangs in the balance. All while he's trying to figure out what kind of sicko is messing with him. But now he's worried that if he goes to the police, they're actually going to start wondering, is he involved? Is he withholding evidence? What's going on with this guy, so he's scared to go to police? I was kept guessing the entire time during this book. My heart was pounding the end is very satisfying. Before the genuine popcorn thriller that had us all throwing books across the room, there was Dean Koontz writing books that scared the bejesus out of us. And this is a great example of that. It's *Velocity* by Dean Koontz.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 16:22

Yes, I What a fantastic setup. And you know, it also reminded me of that book that you read in you, I think you really liked *The Chain*, right? Which is a much more recent book, but it's that that really solid setup that just makes you say, Well, now I have to read that book,

Kaytee Cobb 16:36

I have to know what happened.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 16:37

Yeah. Alright, my next book is much newer, so we're not going nearly as far backlist. This, in fact, was a book that was on our May Indie Press List. And this was recommended to us by the young adult buyer at Fabled as a part of the Indie Press List. This is Furyborn by Claire Legrand and I loved this book. Alright. Here's our setup. At the start of our book, Rielle Dardenne risks everything to save her best friend from an ambush, but in doing so, she exposes herself as one of a pair of prophesied queens, a queen of light and a queen of blood. To prove that she's the good one, the light one the Sun Queen, Rielle must endure seven elemental magic trials. If she fails, she'll be executed as the Blood Queen, unless the trials kill her first. Then we have our second storyline, which takes place 1000 years later, when the legend of Queen Rielle is so old and so long told that it's really kind of more like a fairy tale to Eliana. Eliana is a bounty hunter. And she's got some major skills and some abilities that have convinced her that she is basically untouchable, unkillable until the day that her mother vanishes and to find her Eliana joins a rebel captain and discovers that the evil at the Empire's heart is more terrible than she'd ever imagined. Then they fight a cosmic war and bah, bah, bah, bah, bah, that's where the setup really goes wrong. Okay. And this is why I hate I hate the setup for this book. It's you like, it is what it is. Right? But this is one of those things where really honestly, if I had been in Fabled, and I had gone up to it's got this gorgeous cover. And then I had picked the cover up and read the jacket copy, I would have been like, no thank you and put it right, because right, the queen in the blood Queen and who in the cosmic war and the evil heart of the...yuck. It's just so 1000 years and I like exactly right. It's just, it's just too much. But this is the part of the indie press list. And I really have come to very much trust really all the book buyers at Fabled, but their, their YA book buyer is so much a trusted source for me. So when she said to me specifically, "I dare you to read the first chapter and not want to keep reading". I was like, hold my beer. But you know what? It was one of the best first chapters that I have read in a really, really long time. It is so good. Rielle is one of my favorite characters that I've read in forever because it's like, is she bad? Because we have reason to think Yes, very. Is she good but trying to look bad? Is she good but doing bad things? Because sometimes we need to do those things for the realm. Is she just a psychopath? It's a mystery and the I spent the entire book trying to solve it. It was really really, really interesting. And I loved the two characters and I love their entangled stories. I loved the the magic in the book is super cinematic. I'm a sucker for really well done magic in this book really has it. It also has these, this the seven elemental trials that she has to go through

Kaytee Cobb 20:09

That was my favorite,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 20:10

like the triwizard tournament only where you can actually die. So like

Kaytee Cobb 20:15

a lot of times...

Meredith Monday Schwartz 20:16

really right it really, really high stakes, but just heart pounding in the best possible way. So this book is an amazing start to a series. I've I've ordered the second one, I have several friends who have read the entire series and have said, it's all really, really good. They're all out right now. So even if you the book ends on a bit, it completed enough for me to feel really like, Okay, I'm ready to kind of move on to other books. But I also wanted to know what was going to happen. So do know that those two books are out, and it ends on a bit of a cliffhanger. So I do want to say that also, there are some steamy sex scenes. Not as bad as you know, it's not super, super, super steamy, but maybe don't hand it to your 13 year old. It's around the steaminess of the first ACOTAR, not the second one, but in A Court of Thorns and Roses. The first one that I want to say that the book this book has angels that are 12 feet tall and can whisper inside your head. It has a really interesting love triangle but does not follow the cliches. And it has magic based on the elements that had my mind spinning in the best possible way. And if you like books where most of the action, in fact, almost all of the story is based on women, this is a great book for you. So my advice here, if you love the first chapter, know that chapters two through four are involved in a little bit of world building. But by the time you get to chapter five, you are off to the races for the entire rest of this pretty good size book and it is such an enjoyable ride. I loved everything about this book, and I'm definitely going to read further into the series. So this is Furyborn by Claire Legrand. All right, Kaytee, what is your third book this week?

Kaytee Cobb 22:03

Okay, my third book this week is called Unclaimed by Courtney Milan. I bought this book as a Kindle deal in December of 2019, which is where books go to die is my Kindle. It's really bad. Because I stopped reading anything on my Kindle except for galleys and arcs. And after a disappointing experience that led me to abandon the arc that I was reading, and feeling like I'm mostly caught up, I decided to treat myself by diving into this book. So what pushed this one to the top of the pile, you may ask of the hundreds of books that are on my Kindle unread... It was Jamie Golden. She talked about in Episode 39 of season three. She mentioned that she had recently read a Courtney Milan book, and Courtney Milan, for her and for many readers is the very top of the historical romance genre. So I finally decided to pick one up. And this one Unclaimed, we meet Sir Mark Turner. He's famous. You want to know why Meredith? Because he wrote a book called The Men's Guide to Chastity. He's the most famous virgin in England. And there are some people who do not like this. One such person offers a 1000 pound reward to the person who is able to seduce this man and prove it. And Jessica Farley, a courtesan, who wants to be able to leave the business and strike out on her own independently decides to take on the challenge. Well, it's a romance, so I don't have to tell you too much more but you have to know that sparks will fly and steamy and dreamy. And there's a lot of built up sexual sexual tension. There is as in many romances, a misunderstanding that has to derail the plot, because Hi, just talk to each other already. You guys just fix it by using your words. This one had great dialogue though with a lot of zingers and I really enjoyed it. It is considered book two in the Turner series. But as we've mentioned before, a series in a romance is not a continuation of a previous plot. So we do have that "we're not animals, we do not read series out of order". That is not true for romances. You can read these books in any order. The first one explores Ash Turner's relationship, and then this one moves to his brother Mark Turner. So this book was published in 2011. So yay, more backlist gold for me. And I'm very excited that I was able to get some more backlist in and I will probably pick up some more Courtney Milan. The the way she writes dialogue and like zingy one liners between her two characters

had me laughing out loud while I was trying to put Onalee lay down for a nap on multiple occasions. So it was problematic and it was also excellent. I really loved it. It was Unclaimed by Courtney Milan, despite the male virgin thing.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 24:45

That totally sounds like a setup for a reality show that would exist right now.

Kaytee Cobb 24:49

Oh my gosh, I know, especially if the guy was named Mike and the girl was named Kaytee. Yes, exactly. Exactly.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 24:58

Oh, man. That sounds like a good one. All right, Kaytee. I'm gonna take a big old deep breath. I have a big deep breath to take before I talk about this book because I am emotionally invested in a major way for the book I'm about to talk about. Alright, I'm going to talk about A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles.

Kaytee Cobb 25:17

Okay, I'll take a deep breath too.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 25:20

I have a lot to say, my friends. And I've been waiting to talk about this book on the show. Alright, here's the setup. It's 1922. Our lead character is Count Alexander Rostov. And he is basically, he's basically found guilty of being super rich and not feeling bad enough about it by a Bolshevik tribunal, and he's sentenced to house arrest in the Metropol hotel, which is this grand hotel that happens to be right across the street from the Kremlin. Count Rostov has grown up very, very wealthy. He spent his entire life with really unimaginable wealth. And now he must live in a teeny tiny attic room for the rest of his life. Because if he steps out of the hotel, he'll be shot or locked up or shot and locked up. It's Russia. I don't know. It could be both.

Kaytee Cobb 26:13

All the things, break his kneecaps, throw them in a trunk. Exactly.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 26:18

And that, my friends, is the soup sandwich of a setup that has kept me from reading this book for five years. Which is a horrible shame. Because this book is a revelation. Alright, Roxanna and I read this together, and it was a full body experience for us. As I've mentioned, we read it right as we came out of The Eighth Life, and we just couldn't have guessed that it was going to be the perfect balm for our depressed souls. After we read The Eighth Life, it was just, it was just the perfect book at the at the perfect time. And I'm sort of mad that I hadn't read it before. But really, honestly, it came at the exact right time for me, which I think is important. So first, let's deal with the elephant in the room. And let me say that I do not know why this book has been pinned as slow and character driven. It is the worst failing of the reading community that we have been calling this book slow and character driven. Because for the love of all that is holy, lots happens in this book, tons happens, it moves at a really

good pace. Just because there is not a murder in the middle of it or an airplane crashing doesn't mean it's strictly character driven. Second, what happens in this book is so incredibly interesting. And funny. I laughed out loud more times than I can count. I'm even going to tell you that I whooped a couple of times. It's a whooping aloud book, and no one told me this and I'm so mad about it. Because people were saying it's a meditative study of the human spirit. That's an actual quote, I will tell you

Kaytee Cobb 28:07

Ew, who said that?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:09

Sure. It is but Christ on a cracker. It's not that's not all that it is. That piece sneaks up on you. That piece is hidden within the center of the candy. But that candy is wrapped in delicious, one of a kind Russian chocolate. If you love a book with a character that you can both admire and root for, pick up this book. If you love a book about found family, pick up this book. If you want to see what a super healthy enneagram two looks like in a challenging situation, pick up this book. And if you love to say that a book delighted or charmed you or you hugged it at the end. Why haven't you read this book yet? This book has a delightfully prepared bouillabaisse that will make you interested in that soup and friendship in a way that you've never been before. It has a game of hide and seek that will make you laugh out loud. It has a scene involving wine bottles that will explain communism to you in a way that will make you finally understand it. And it has an ending that is actual perfection. I'm going to go so far as to say two things about this book that are entirely shocking. Number one, I am not willing to call this my favorite book of all time, because I refuse to move the Count of Monte Cristo. But I am going to say that my favorite books of all time both involve a count, I now have two number ones. Secondly, I'm going to say that I firmly believe that while it is definitely true, that you could pick up this book and have it not be the right time for you in your life. I am willing to say that at some point, there will be a right time in your life. I think that that is true for every reader. And because of that, I'm going to urge you, if you've picked it up and found it slow, or not the right book, try it again in a few years. At some point, it will be exactly right. In short, you don't read this book because you want to read a slow paced character driven novel with beautiful writing. You don't read it because it's a meditative study of the resilience of the human spirit. No, you read it because it's interesting. You read it, because you want to turn the pages because things happen, things that are funny and fascinating. You read it, because you will learn something, you'll go to a place you've never been before. And mostly, you read this because you will get to know a character that you will love so much and you will never forget. That is why you read *A Gentleman in Moscow* by Amor Towles.

Kaytee Cobb 31:01

We're not allowed to both be crying, Meredith, that doesn't work.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 31:06

This book. Yeah. I don't think I've ever cried on the show before.

Kaytee Cobb 31:11

I don't think. I don't think so.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 31:13

I don't think I have.

Kaytee Cobb 31:16

I agree with everything you said. And I also put it off for entirely too long, and, like, kicked myself in the face for having waited for so long. But I also feel like it came to me at exactly the right time, right at last fall. We were deep in the middle of the pandemic, feeling very isolated, very alone. And I felt like this book wrapped me in a warm hug, like I hugged it, but it had hugged me already. So right. I agree.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 31:42

Right? Exactly, exactly. Not it's not right at every you know, every time but when it is right, it's exactly right. And I just think people should continue to give it a try. It's wonderful. And he has a new book coming out in September, which I have pre ordered, and I'm The Lincoln Highway, and it's already getting some great reviews from really trusted sources. And I would leave my husband for Amor Towles. I'm absolutely in love with him. I'm 100% in love with him. He has my heart. Okay, not really, but you know, in a literary way, not in a real way of totally. Alright. Okay, so...

Kaytee Cobb 32:18

That got emotional.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 32:20

Sometimes we talk about books that we'll never think about again, and sometimes we talk about books that are absolutely life changing and either way we bring them to the show. And that's what Currently Reading is right? You never know what you're gonna get.

Kaytee Cobb 32:33

Didn't know you were signing up for this today. Did you?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 32:36

Okay, all right. What did we do on our summer break? We have a lot of things to talk about. So when you started to prepare for this, what were the first things that you thought about or how did you did you kind of look back on what we had talked about that we were going to do and then see what your results were?

Kaytee Cobb 32:55

That is mostly what I did. I also at the very beginning of 2021, I made an intention, I set out into the universe that I wanted to read less than in 2020. And prior to summer break, that wasn't going so hot. I was like, Oh, no, oh, no, I think I think I'm gonna beat that record. That's not good. And it turns out that we got into the summer months, I got to see friends and hug people. And I got to travel a few places. And my reading did actually decrease over the past two months to pre pandemic levels, which, which feels good, but also different and kind of scary, because sometimes, like, that's where I find my identity is like, I read so much. Sure, yeah. And so it felt like, Oh, well, this month I there's only going to be you know, 15 books in that little round up instead of 25 or 28 or 30. Like, like stupid numbers. And so I've been trying to figure out what feels off about that. And all I can come up with is that I haven't been

picking up paper books to bench and that makes my reading feel a little broken right now. Because we've been we have been around traveling so much. Because we travel I try not to bring too many paper books in my suitcases and stuff. And so I'm bringing my Kindle and my audiobooks. And then I'm like, nothing on paper is interesting to me. And I'm abandoning things left and right. And it just feels a little bit off for me. And that's that's how my reading was affected by summer vacation. But I have have other things to say. But I want to hear a little bit about how your summer break has gone so far.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:29

Right? So I mean, I think it's been really, really good. So I looked back on some of the things that I had said that I wanted to do. So I said that I wanted to read slower. That was one of the first things that I said so when so for example, when we went my best friend and I went we went to Hawaii for a week, just the two of us, right? Which seems like the absolute place where I would do more reading and I read about three books a week, right? So you think okay, well Meredith, you're going Hawaii with just your best friend. And you have all this time you'll at least double that right? I only finished one book that entire week. And it was actually really nice because I didn't feel broken, I felt like I was very much able to just be like all read when I want to. But I also will let myself kind of just stare out at the ocean instead of feeling like I'm on a clock and oh, I better read because I'm not I only have 10 minutes. So it kind of felt like I can ease into letting my brain do just exactly what it wanted to do at the time. And that I think was really, really great, because when we came back from Hawaii, for the next I think four weeks of our break, I actually read quite a bit. So I talked about reading slower, but actually my pace was, was really faster than normal. And again, because I think that pressure was off. Also, we weren't recording and editing and all those normal things. I had some extra pockets. But then this last week, I have my reading has almost screeched to a stop. So ebbs and flows for sure. One of the things I said I definitely wanted to allow myself to do that I did accomplish was I wanted to say that I didn't have to spend every free moment reading, right. And so I caught up on a lot of podcasts listening, during our summer break. I don't listen to a lot of podcasts in general. But I listened to a few book podcasts, especially that I had gotten a little bit behind in the episodes. And I just let myself catch up on all of those. And it was so much fun. I added to my TBR I thought a lot about the shows and what I like so much about them. I thought about our show, it just opened up a different channel in my brain. And that's exactly what breaks are supposed to do. So I felt like that was a major box checked. I felt I felt good about that.

Kaytee Cobb 36:55

Yeah, yeah, I like that. One of my other goals for the summer was to get Jason to read something. And I did. Yes, I bought, I bought him Project Hail Mary for Father's Day. And then right after that it was on sale on Audible for like \$5 or something. So I grabbed it there as well. We went road tripping with our new camper like everybody else got during the pandemic, and I convinced him that maybe we should just listen to a couple chapters. And that way, whenever he has time to get going, he would already be invested in the story. Well, we listened to eight chapters, and then he devoured the rest. And I was so proud of myself. For my, like, foresight and knowledge. Like I seriously was patting myself on the back so much. And I will say that that's, that's a trick that works not just on husbands that are reluctant readers, but on children. It works on children, you guys, like, you know, getting started with an audio book in the car even. "Hey, we're going to listen to the first few chapters of this audio book". And then we actually have it from the library. Guess what? "Oh, Mommy, I already read that book, because I finished it later today", you know, and it works on me for character driven fiction, especially like if I can

just be puttering around and letting myself get into the story. I might get so invested in a character that all of a sudden, I don't mind picking it up on paper. And it doesn't matter if it takes a long time to get into the action because I'm already invested. So I love that trick. And the other thing that I want to point out that happened this summer is and I think Meredith, it has to do exactly with what you're talking about. You listen to a lot of podcast, you came to me and you said, "Kaytee, we have bonus content on Patreon called Kaytee Reads Too Much", which is the longest running episode we have over there. And it was getting frenetic. It was getting crazed kind of to listen to this big rattle off of everything I had read in a month. So you said "Kaytee, let's finesse it. Let's mess with it. Let's actively mull it a little bit". And we decided together, but for me, to make a change to that content. And now, it is like one of my favorite things. It just sparks. And it's so of like joy and great book setups and funny superlatives. And I just I'm so excited about it. And I don't think that that would have happened without this long summer break where we had some of that extra brain space to mull about those things. So really excited about that. And I'm really proud of it. So I just want to shout it out a little bit.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:24

Absolutely. I mean, I will just I want to highlight that so much because I think the new version of Kaytee reads too much is as I said in my post in the bookish friends it is this format allows you to bring to that piece of content every thing about you that made me want you as my podcast partner, right? Smart, funny, bringing books that would not normally normally be on my TBR. But when you really are able to dive into them, I'm super interested in. I just, I love, love, love the format with format but by the way that you completely came up with. You, you did all of that work, you did all that creation. And I think that, to your point, Kaytee, it really does speak to the issue. So many times, I have a hard time you have a hard time resting, taking breaks, because we feel like if we're not productive, I struggle, let me just speak for myself. If I'm not being productive, I feel like I'm unworthy. That is my type one. That is my, that's what my inner critic tells me that if I just lay around to do nothing, I am bad or wrong or fraudulent, or everyone will realize that they thought I was this person, but I'm really this schlump. So rest is hard. Rest, even sometimes breaks as a person, as a podcaster feels scary, because you worry you're going to lose some momentum. But really, so many times I've seen in my business, especially when I take breaks when I allow myself bandwidth, the creation flows. And so really, for my business, for our work here, taking breaks helps us to really take that fresh look. So anyone who has been thinking, you know, I'm worried about taking a rest from whatever, because maybe I'm, you know, maybe I'll lose some momentum. Or maybe I'll look like I'm lazy. No, really, you're gonna come back with guns blazing almost every single time. That's what happened. So I'm so glad. I'm so glad that you were able to do what you did on your break, I was able to do what I did on my break. And now we are really ready to just tackle season four. And so glad to be doing what what we do here for all of our listeners. So with that, let's talk about our books that we want to press. So what book did you bring for this first episode of Season Four?

Kaytee Cobb 41:45

Okay, the book that I decided to press today after much like consternation, with myself over it, I decided to go with Such a Fun Age by Kiley Reid. And I wanted to go with this one because very much like The Other Black Girl that I already mentioned earlier, this one had the internet a little bit divided back in early 2020 when it released, which actually it was December 31 of 2019, which is a stupid book release day. So but that didn't stop me from loving it. Amira is our main character. She's a Black babysitter. Her

employer is facing a strange incident at home. So she asks for some late night babysitting outside the house one night, Amira picks up the precocious four year old Briar and takes her to the grocery store nearby where they're just walking the aisles and looking at things in the fridges. And then a security guard accuses her of kidnapping the child that she's babysitting. Thankfully, the entire incident is caught on video. And then of course goes viral as she is exonerated by her employer. And that's it. That's like the first chapter. And it's the big thing that happens in this book. So instead of it being about build up to a big event, it's more of an exploration of Amira's life, the push and pull of being Black in America, the way her employer wants to be her friend and her boss, the way this white woman wants to prove to Amira that she's definitely definitely not racist at all ever, and everything in between. It doesn't solve racism. It doesn't give us a big fiery retort from a mirror where she becomes like, famous for being like the most amazing sassy Black woman, right? This is fiction, but it's real life. For many Americans, you're almost guaranteed to see yourself and these characters from one side or another. And it's uncomfortable and funny, and genuine and sometimes sweet. And I really loved it at the time. I still think of it often a year and a half later, but it did get a lot of like, cranky people that didn't like how little happened or how little how little, you know, Amira was able to step into the role of like social justice warrior, when she's just been a regular 20 ish year old black woman. So I really loved it. And if you love books I love I want to press it into your hands. I also want to press her interview with Trevor Noah into your hands because I love Trevor Noah, he's my other boyfriend. And the two of them together. The conversation they have around the book is just wonderful. Megan will make sure that's in the show notes. But I am pressing into your hands Such a Fun Age by Kiley Reid.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:13

Oh, that's a good one. I'm glad that's on the press list. Alright, so I was thinking about books that when I heard their setup, I wasn't very interested. I wasn't as interested as I ended up being when I read them right. So kind of in that mindset. So I want to put on the press list Devil in the White City by Erik Larson.

Kaytee Cobb 44:32

I read this during our break.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:36

Oh, did you really?

Kaytee Cobb 44:36

Yes.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:37

Did you like it?

Kaytee Cobb 44:38

I pressed it into somebody's hands when I finished Meredith.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:41

Good. Excellent. Okay. So the setup is fairly simple here. The book basically follows two different storylines, right. So we've got the the the creation, the building and the execution of the 1893 World's

Fair in Chicago. And then we've got the story of a horrific serial killer, who used the fare to lure his victims. So this is a really simple setup, right? We've got these, these two different, really disparate kind of subject storylines, right. And one of them, the whole concept of the kind of creation and building of the World's Fair, I think, was the part that put me off because I was sort of like, why do I care about that, I love serial killer stuff. There's plenty of other places for me to get me that stuff. I don't need it wrapped in a history lesson. That's basically how I felt before I read this book. But in the hands of Erik Larson, who is really, really excellent at narrative nonfiction, he makes both of these storylines incredibly riveting, I was as interested and invested in how the Worlds Fair came together, as I was shocked by the storyline about the serial killer. And of course, you guys know, you've been listening to this show, you know, one of the things that I like more than anything, and this book does it in spades, is talk about how easy it used to be to kill people. And in 1893, you really just, you were ham handed if you couldn't get away with killing people in 1893. This guy was killing people, right and left, and with very little care, and he was having a grand old time. And so anyway, it is a fascinating story. Really, really well done. It definitely goes deep into the history. So there were a few times where I was like, oh, we're really, really getting into it here. But then right, as I would get to that point, he would pull us right back out and move the story along. I felt like I learned a ton. And I enjoyed it the entire time. But I also read it quite a few times with my mouth sort of agape because I was so shocked in both the different subjects, you know, subjects that we were learning about. So overall, I love it. And anyone says anyone who tells me that they love narrative nonfiction, this is my number one pick for them. This is Devil in the White City by Erik Larson.

Kaytee Cobb 47:09

Oh, man, I loved it, too. There. There are things from that book that I hope I never forget. Because I'm like, dang, him building his house. What and the Ferris wheel... how many people? What like, what, it's just crazy.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:25

It's number of people, the number of people who just went missing and just really nobody went looking for him at all?

Kaytee Cobb 47:31

Nope.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:32

I mean, it was my mouth was hanging open. So I was reading parts of it aloud to Johnny because I was like, you're not gonna believe this. "Meredith, I know it's 1893 people were going I really they're dropping like flies". So anyway, what a, what a, what a really horrific serial killer it is that we're talking about,

Kaytee Cobb 47:51

like and I gave it to another doctor. I mean, I think it's great for doctors.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:54

Oh, totally. Right. No, absolutely. Any history buff is gonna love it it's just it It's just got a lot of really good stuff there. All right, 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 48:11

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:15

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

Kaytee Cobb 48:26

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:33

And if you really want to help us become a Patreon subscriber. It's just \$5 a month and you get all kinds of fantastic content including the brand new Kaytee Reads Too Much. All Things Murderful with Meredith, and every single month with the Indie Press List, we have a fantastic independent bookstore press books into our listeners hands. It's really good stuff. You can also shout us out on social media. That is a really big help to us finding our perfect audience.

Kaytee Cobb 49:03

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:08

Alright, until next week. Happy reading Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 49:11

Happy reading Meredith