



Season 5, Episode 37: Following the Schedule + Reader Retreat Reconnaissance

Mon, Apr 24, 2023 • 1:08:24

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:10

Hey readers. Welcome to the currently reading podcast. We are bookish best friends who spend time every week talking about the books that we've read recently. And as you know, we won't shy away from having strong opinions. So get ready.

Kaytee Cobb 00:23

We are light on the chit chat heavy on the book talk and our descriptions will always be spoiler free. Today we'll discuss our current reads a bookish deep dive and then we'll visit the fountain.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:33

I'm Meredith Monday Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas. And my reading can be cardio if I'm doing it right.

Kaytee Cobb 00:41

I'm Kaytee Cobb homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico and I am a book therapy aficionado. This is episode number 37 of season five. And we are so glad you're here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:52

All right, Kaytee, I have a feeling this episode might be a long and be wacky.

Kaytee Cobb 00:57

Apparently, we're both a little slap happy this afternoon.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:01

Exactly which we shouldn't be we're recording at our normal time. Okay, we are going to let you guys know right off the top that we are going to be deep diving today into a topic that is very, very close to my own heart. The reading retreat, I just came back from one I think I've nailed the format, at least for the kind of reading retreat that I want to go on. And Kaytee and I are going to deep dive into that. And all the minutiae as to what made it great and what we would do differently next time.

Kaytee Cobb 01:29

I'm so excited about this for my own, like selfish self interest, and for everybody else to get to hear about it as well.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:36

Yeah, it's gonna be a good one. All right. Before we do that, though, let's talk about our bookish moments of the week. What have you got Katie?

Kaytee Cobb 01:43

Okay, Meredith, I know that you have seen these like memes and jokes that float around on the internet about winning therapy. But this week as my bookish moment, I think I officially one therapy, no good. So I've been seeing my BetterHelp therapist for four months. Now, of course, this is not an ad for BetterHelp. Because we don't do ads on the show, it just is important to know that it's better help because it plays into the fact that I see her over video. And I also have a chat going with her at all times. She's attentive and empathetic and pushes me in the right ways. And it will surprise exactly zero listeners of the show that I manage to work a book or two into every therapy session. And sometimes in our chat, I send photos of book covers. And she's also seen my bookshelves, of course, they're a big part of my life. My therapist has recently started asking me as part of our session, what I've learned lately, through my reading how my reading life is because she knows it's a big indicator for me of my mental health. I've told her about books about friendship, and grief and joy. I've told her about books on the natural world and sent her those photos of my bookshelves. Now, of course, part of this is just natural therapist empathy and consideration for me and the ways that I process as her patient. But the other part of it is that I managed to turn even my therapy bookish because it's so much part of my life, even when it's not just the, quote, book therapy that you and I do together here every week. So I I like even official therapy, I have turned into a bookish moment of the week.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:16

Well, I think it's great that you're using BetterHelp. Because there's such a convenience about it. And it's sort of broken down a lot of barriers for a lot of people who are like, I want to do therapy, but I just don't. I don't know who I should go to I don't know how to get started. So it's great to have a person and again, right, we're not we don't do ads, we don't you know, but that's a great resource. And I'm glad that that's working for you. And that she's a quality enough therapist to really understand the part that books play in your life. And it really is an indicator of mental state, kind of where you are. And so I think that's I think that's wonderful. That's a great bookish moment of the week.

Kaytee Cobb 03:55

What's yours?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:56

All right. Reading can be cardio if you're doing it, right. Here's how I know. Now, let me say, Kaytee, let me say to you personally, I know that I shouldn't use this as my bookish moment of the week, but sometimes I cruise into a recording and I've just so recently been having an experience with my reading that it's like all over me and I have to talk about it. Even if I should probably save portions of it for later. Don't worry. You're gonna hear about this book in detail later. Kaytee. I heard about Drowning by TJ Newman. A while ago but then when I just recorded All Things Murderful with Elizabeth Barnhill. She brought it as a book that she's excited about coming out soon. It comes out on May 30. This is the follow up but it's completely standalone. This is not a series the books completely standalone. Obviously in summer of 2021. From TJ Newman. We got Falling and now this summer. We are getting

the book that everybody is going to be reading it is going to be one of if not the biggest book of the summer. It's going to be one of the biggest books of the summer. We're Drowning, it comes up may 30, as I said, and it's let me just tell you that I wasn't going to read it, because I'm going to Hawaii in May. And this book happens on a flight from Hawaii. I wasn't going to read it because I'm a little bit claustrophobic. This book centers on a plane that crashes and then survivors are inside and they go down to the bottom of the ocean.

Kaytee Cobb 05:25

It's like a submarine plane at that point.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 05:27

And yet, Kaytee, what did I do today? What did I do?

Kaytee Cobb 05:32

Ate it up like a croissant.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 05:34

I opened it on NetGalley. And again, it's coming out in you know, not very long, but I opened it up on Net Galley, blinked and was 35% in and I'll tell you why I blinked I blinked because my Fitbit pinged me, telling me that I had reached my minutes of active, get my stuff. I was like, good job with your cardio, Meredith. I was sitting in my chair, you guys. I was sitting in my chair. And my heart was pounding so hard that my Fitbit said, Hey, good job getting some exercise today. So I'm only 35% of the way in. I can't comment on what I'm going to think about the book as a whole. Everyone I know who's read it so far has said it's really really good, including Elizabeth, who, of course, I take her feedback extraordinarily seriously. And so yeah, I just, I was literally doing that moments before you and I recorded so that had to be my bookish moment of week because it was getting me some cardio. Closing some rings.

Kaytee Cobb 06:33

I love it. I love it so much. And I love it when my Fitbit is like, workout minutes achieved. And I'm like, wait, I was just teaching or yelling at my children. What?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:44

Right? I know, it does kind of make you think, huh?

Kaytee Cobb 06:49

Maybe I should change that threshold? I don't know. Exactly.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:52

Exactly. All right. Let's talk about our current reads with your first book this week.

Kaytee Cobb 06:57

Okay, my first book this week is nonfiction. It's called Platonic by Marisa G. Franco. And this title plays into my New Year's resolution this year to attempt to make a few new in person friends. In Santa Fe, we

are pretty isolated geographically from other people. So this has been a thing I'm focusing on when our friend Laura Tremaine was researching for her new book, she read this one and then she blurb-ed it as well. So while I waited for *The Life Council* to release, I grabbed this one from my local indie, and joined a bookish friends buddy read of it organized by our friend Marie. *Platonic* focuses on exactly what it sounds like. The non-romantic relationships in our lives, which are often thought of as less than, in comparison to the ones that are glorified in pop culture love stories, books, music, and film. But the truth of the matter is that being lonely really affects us on a number of levels, even health-wise. And science shows us that platonic friendships are possibly the crucial key to shaping who we are, and how we find joy in our daily lives. Marisa G. Franco, the author, is a psychologist and a professor, who examines the data about friendship and relationships, relates it to her own life stories. So this does have a little bit of a memoir, undercurrent, and then unpacks the advice that we get that seems to be competing, as well as dispelling some of the myths that we hear about in pop culture. Friendship is not easy, but we think it should be. There are potential minefields all over the place, especially when we're first meeting friends. We're supposed to be vulnerable, but not disclose everything in the closet. We're supposed to put forth effort but not appear needy, we're supposed to show up, but also prioritize our own mental health and self-care. It seems like there's no right place to step. So Marisa goes through the research that backs up each side of each of those claims, and then uses it to guide us on our own decisions about what techniques to try, this became a little point of frustration for some of my buddy readers. This is not a one-size-fits-all. Here's how you make and keep friends recipe book. There's not a set of rules that say, definitely do this. And don't ever do this, because people are different. And relationships are about two people getting to know each other. Each of those people is going to have their own baggage, their own expectations around the way that they interact. But I did find it really encouraging in a number of ways. First, if you're lonely, it's not just you. Second, if it feels like you're not sure how to get started, it's not just you. There are competing messages, even in the research regarding making and keeping friends. And third, if you've recently experienced a change in friendship, and it's a point of pain, it's not just you, friendships are crucial to our well-being. As Marisa Franco points out here, it's valuable and it hurts to lose it because it's valuable. Be gentle with yourself. And yes, I am preaching to myself here. The end of this blurb says *Platonic* will give you permission to hold friendship and highest regard because it deserves to be and for that reason, and many more, I heartily recommend it. It's *Platonic* by Marisa G. Franco.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:02

Now this was one of the ones that almost on our no-prep episode, this is one of the ones that I almost had you talk about because I've been so interested in it and so much thinking about the topic of friendship, especially with *The Life Council* and you know that all of the ideas that Laura Tremaine has in that fantastic book two and what I keep coming back to is I saw somewhere online, something that said, what if your friends or your soulmates? What if it's not your partner or your romantic partner? That needs to be? I was like, That makes so much sense.

Kaytee Cobb 10:36

So it's just that like, feeling of completeness. And like, there's one person who so knows you and understands

Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:44

Yeah, my husband does not understand me. I know a lot of the time he loves me very well. But he does not understand me in the way that my best friend does. Right. So yeah, I just think this topic of female friendship, or friendship in general, is really an interesting one and right, Platonic, and The Life Council, I'd say would be a great book flight.

Kaytee Cobb 11:08

They're like perfect bedfellows. They would be best friends.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 11:12

They would be they would be they would be soulmates. Right, I love it. Okay, so I'm going to talk about my first book. First of all, I'm going to say that I'm going to be talking about a book that deals with the theme of abortion and abortion rights. So I want to be really clear that if that topic is difficult for you, or just one that you don't want to think about and deal with right now, that's totally okay. Feel free to skip ahead until Katy starts her next book, you can use our show notes to tell exactly when that's going to happen. I also want to say that I will be bringing a cozy and a memoir that I really liked later in the show, so no, that's definitely never fear, never fear. Just just want to want you to be aware as I talk about this one. This however, was a book that I really, really liked. I read Red Clocks by Leni Zumas. Have you read this one? Probably forever ago. It's very backlist.

Kaytee Cobb 12:03

Yes. I read it when I was a member of book of the month. It was a long time ago.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 12:06

Exactly. All right. Here's the setup. In this alternate history novel, abortion is once again illegal in America. Alternate History. History is changing real fast. Okay. In Vitro Fertilization is banned to legal and the personhood amendment grants rights of life, liberty and property to every embryo. Again, I say in my notes in 2018. This was an alternate history. Our story centers us in a small Oregon fishing town and we follow five very different women as they navigate this new normal. We've got roe who is a single high school teacher and is trying to have a baby on her own. practically impossible in this environment. Susan is a harried mother of two trapped in a crumbling marriage. Maddie is the adopted daughter of loving parents who finds herself pregnant with nowhere to turn. And Jen is the forest dwelling herbalist or meander in this story, who brings all of their stories together when she's arrested and put on trial in a modern day witch hunt. All right, this was a Book of the Month pick in January 2018. Kaytee, that's when I got it. And it promptly went on to my shelf. And I did not pick it up for more than five years, and went looking for a backless book that I'd wanted to read for a long time. And this one landed in my hands. I honestly didn't have any idea what it was about until I opened it up and found that it was about an America just after Roe vs. Wade was dismantled. This book back in the day was dystopian fiction. The topic is now of course reality. So this made it even more interesting to me. This book is incredibly well written and brings together the points of view of the five women. We follow each of those and then beautifully brought together into a fabric. In my almost 50 years, I have been each one of these women. I've been the young woman pregnant before she wants to be. I've been the wife, gifted with children and now doubting her choices. I've been the older woman hoping against hope for the positive pregnancy test. And I'm becoming or at least I hope I am becoming the mender the person to whom

other women can come to for advice, counsel and solutions. So this book was incredibly personal to me. And I suspect that it would feel equally personal to every woman who reads it though in a myriad different ways. There's no question that if you've read *The Handmaid's Tale* recently, and it rocked your world, and I don't want to say will enjoy, but I will say will be affected by the reading of *Red Clocks*. There's also no question that this won't be a book for everyone. It's got a singular style to its pros, which I can see some finding intentionally odd. And it's absolutely rife with touchy political issues from abortion to the place of a woman in the home and in the world. And Of course, trigger warnings abound, including for every single thing around pregnancy, child rearing and mothering. I found it to be immensely readable and a book that helped me look deeper into myself. And the kind of woman I've been, and want to be. This is *Red Clocks* by Leni Zumas.

Kaytee Cobb 15:18

I just want anybody who's listening to know that if that made you cry, you're not the only one.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 15:24

Yeah, it's a very affecting book.

Kaytee Cobb 15:26

It is. When I read it, I was pregnant with Onalee. So I was having a very singular experience with regard to where I saw myself in that book. I really love the idea of looking at each of these women and seeing how they all play into your story.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 15:45

Yeah, no, I was I was very interested to see that because I was like, I'm resonating with all of these characters, because I've been them in in my life. And so many of us have right in within the years where were child bearing or not out of choice or not. Right. We often have sat in a lot of these seats and been in a lot of their stories. So it was it was very interesting.

Kaytee Cobb 16:08

Well, that's two episodes in a row in case anybody's keeping track where Kaytee cried while talking to her co-host. Okay, I'm very different book than that, of course. My next one that I want to talk about is called *Beasts of Prey* by Ayanna Grey. This is a YA fantasy novel. It's the first in a trilogy, and it's written by a debut author. And both of those things are going to play into my setup. And my review. Kofi is our main character. Well, one of the two. She lives in the city of Lakhossa and works at the night Zoo. She and her mother, both care for the magical creatures. They are indentured servants trying to pay off a family debt in order to secure their freedom. When a terrible accident threatens her safety and that of her loved ones, she unleashes a power that she doesn't understand. Our second main character is named Ekon. He is a warrior, a hero following in the footsteps of his much decorated father. On the night that he is supposed to ascend to his role as an elite warrior, one of the sons of the sixth a fire at the night zoo, forces him into an encounter with the shatani, a terrible beast that feeds on the inhabitants of the city. Kofi uses her unexplained power to save Ekon's life, essentially on accident. So he lets her flee instead of taking her in to try and figure out what's going on with her. Separately, and then together, Kofi and Ikondecide to hunt down the night beast, one to capture it and pay off debts, and one to attempt to kill it and make his name great. They form a tentative alliance to hunt down the

beasts together, each to their own ends. But within the greater jungle, they find more questions than answers. This book was excellent. By the end, I couldn't get enough of that story. And by the time I discussed it with a few of our bookish friends, they may have even talked me into reading the second one at some point, which for me right now, series are not happening. So that is notable in itself. But the beginning really struggled. It was clear that this debut author needed a stronger editing hand to help her reign in her story and world building and get to the action. This book is nearly 500 pages in hardcover. And I could have easily taken the first 100 to 150 and turn them into about 15.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 18:22

Oh, wow,

Kaytee Cobb 18:22

It just didn't need that much setup. At the beginning. I've basically told you everything you needed to know from those 150 pages, she spent so much time building up the town, and then we leave it and we enter the jungle. If anything, I would have loved more information about the night zoo and the dangerous creatures there if it has a little bit of a Fantastic Beasts vibe to it. But the beginning almost made me abandon. I did think she did a great job with the central plot, and even that cliffhanger ending that leads us into the next book in the series. However, if you like me are not a series reader right now. I think you could skip the last few chapters and be totally fine to treat this book as a standalone. I did enjoy the experience overall just with a few personal edits. This was Beasts of Prey by Ayana Gray,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 19:09

You do wonder I'm kind of having a similar experience right now reading the first book in a series and I'm thinking is a lot of this world building going to pay off later in the series and that's why we're doing it right now because feels like a little bit of a slog. Alright, my second book is very different from my first one. So never fear we're going to light and airy here we go with the next book I want to talk about is the second in a series and it's called The Black Cat murders by Karen Bough Minyuhlen this as I said second in the series. The first one is Murder at Melrose Court. It was a favorite favorite of mine two years ago in 2021. Our lead character in this book and in the series at large is major Heathcliff Lennox. He's an ex World War One war pilot. He's six foot three delicious inches tall. He has unruly blond hair and was named after the hero of Wuthering heights by his romantic minded mother, much to his great annoyance. He spends much of the books reminding people not to call him Heathcliff. He wants to be called Lennox all the time. At the start of our book, a wedding invitation arrives that Lennox is not very interested in, but then he gets further news of mischief that could be murder. And so off Linux trots to the Earl of blocksford's country estate in the Cotswolds, he soon finds himself in a world of stolen artworks, forgeries, and a priceless something called the bloxburg beauty. But who are the Blocksford beauties and why is it that where they are death seems to follow Heathcliff sorry, Lennox must confront lifelong friends who may not be as upper crusty as they say, unscrupulous artists and dealers out to mid fraud, and finally unravel a plot so complex that even his old adversary the soup sandwich, Chief Inspector swift of Scotland Yard can't solve it. All right. As I said, cozy mystery. The first one I loved, it has a Christmassy theme to it, I read it at Christmas time, it was absolutely perfect. This one, only three and a half stars. But let's talk about why. There was a lot to like about this second book in the series. It just wasn't as sparkling as the first one. So the genre we're in here is definitely gentle, historical mystery. It also is a cozy but gentle mystery would be a great place to shelve it. Any murders that

happen, of course, are off the page. And we're going to play a game of mixed bag mystery here because there were things I liked and things that I really struggled with about this book. I always loved the country, house country estate Cotswold kind of historical mystery. I love the Genteel manners and the opulent surroundings. I like the early 1930s time period that we're in. I like the premise and the large cast of characters in this novel, and more than anything, I absolutely love the audio production of these books. The narrator is Sam do Hurst Phillips and he is wonderful. He does all kinds of voices and accents, including in this novel, an absolutely spot on Texan accent. The other thing that they do in these productions is that they add in not very much. It's very judiciously used, but they add in little sounds in the background. They're kind of cheesy, but then they always make me smile. I also love the appearance of pets in these books. Our lead character Lennox is truly a pet lover, although he doesn't admit that he is. And in this novel, he trails around, not only with his dog, Mr. Fogg, and every time he mentioned Mr. Fogg, there's like a noise that you hear. Yeah, no, it is. But also in this novel, we get to add Mr. Tubbs, a little kitten that starts joining them wherever they go. And it's just kind of sweet. And they have this little consternation that Linux does with him. But you know that he really likes both of them. And at the end of the night, he's like in front of the fire with Mr. tubs and Mr. Fogg, and everything's right in the world. But there were some things as I said that I struggled with mostly, the pacing. This book has a very mushy middle. It's the kind of thing where she got into the mystery, but then just didn't know how to move it forward. For the middle 100 pages. There was a lot of stomping around and asking questions and wondering who might have had which motive, but it all really didn't go anywhere for the entire middle of the book. And I really missed the fantastic sparkling humor of Heathcliff Linux. In this book, he was so much more dour and straight. He didn't have that kind of pluck and charm that he had in the first book, which made me love it and him so much. So overall, a three and a half star book been a nice audio Listen, that didn't take too long and it cleared my palate. After this one, I was definitely ready to dive into something heavier. Again, I should say that there are 10 books in the series, and many of them, including this one are available on Kindle Unlimited, so maybe download a few for those nights where you've accidentally scared the TT out of yourself. And you need something easy and cozy to help you close your eyes. These books are perfect for that. This is the Black Cat Murders by Karen Baugh Minuhen.

Kaytee Cobb 24:26

All right. This is one of the episodes that I wish we had video because the way you like, stomped around everywhere asking questions. made me happy. Okay, I also have some mysterious reading for my third book this week. I want to talk about Symphony of Secrets by Brendan Slocumb. Yes. Listen, I know I have a few author crushes. And this is one of them. So you're just gonna have to bear with me while I talk about the sophomore novel from one of my very favorite books of last year. The Violin Conspiracy Brendon is back in this book with another musical mystery, which really brings in his extensive knowledge of music and composition, and then adds a few interesting elements of appropriation, white saviorism, and the Jazz Age. We've got two timelines here, and the contemporary one we Bern Hendrix, who has just gotten the call of his life. As a kid who was basically raised by the Delaney Foundation. He has built his life and his professional career around the music of Frederick Delaney. He knows everything about this man and his music. When he answers this fateful phone call, he is called in to authenticate and help bring to the stage for the first time a piece of music that was believed to be lost to history. He calls in his nerdy techie friend Eboni, who I love so much to help with the technical and decoding aspects. And together, they start to peel back the layers and maybe unravel

the story around this music in a way that could be disastrous for the foundation. In the past timeline, we're still in Manhattan, but in the 1920s when Frederick Delaney plucks Josephine Reed from the streets after she gives him advice on his piano technique, really elevating it to the next level. Josephine likes a routine finds it difficult to meet people's eyes, and describes sounds and music through colors and nouns in what is never named as synesthesia, or autism, but hits all of those notes. As Frederick realizes how much better she makes him and his music, he also starts to realize that she is prodigy in other ways. When they partner together, his career really starts taking off, leading to the fame and success that made the Delaney Foundation and the present timeline, a possibility as burn any bony start to uncover the truth. The stakes get higher for them in the present timeline, putting them in legitimate legal and physical peril. And as Frederick Delaney realizes how much he needs Josephine Reed, he becomes more and more controlling over her life and activities. The tensions wrapped up and the pages really start to fly. And that's important to note that I said the pages really start to fly. Just like with Brendan's previous book, this is a bit of a slower burn. There are definitely times when it feels like a knowledge of music and composition is what is driving the story for a non music nerd like our friend Sarah at Sarah's bookshelves, she said there were times that she really got bogged down in the musical parts of the story. And I can see that it didn't happen to me, but I get it. For me, the storyline felt a little crazed by the end, and I found myself feeling like it was too much too fast. Like I was like guzzling the book in a way that felt overwhelming, based on the pacing of the rest of the book, I had gotten used to this certain tempo, and then it kind of went off kilter. That didn't stop me from enjoying it all the way through. It's another chart topper have a hit, of course, because I had to put some kind of musical puns in here. This is Symphony of Secrets by Brendon Slocum.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 27:50

Yeah, I'm hearing from a lot of people who really love Violin Conspiracy that they're liking this one too. So I was so happy to hear that. Yeah. Okay. My third book is that memoir that I was talking about, which of course, I never, almost never read in this I never this particular genre, right? Well, you're gonna find out how it came to me. All right, I read All the beauty in the world by Patrick Brinkley. Here's the setup. This is a memoir by Brinkley, who works as a guard in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. And there were so many things I learned in this book that I didn't know before, I didn't realize that millions of people visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art every year, or that it is 2 million square feet in size. I didn't realize that there are hundreds of guards in its employ, or that they all had to wear the exact same suit and shoes, that they go through those shoes, like they're going out of style and have to learn how to stand and how to tune their brains to be able to stand in one place all day, whilst still being actively attentive to what's going on around them. It's fascinating. And those things are just a drop in the bucket of what we learn in this fantastic memoir. Brinkley was working at the New Yorker magazine starting off a career as a journalist when his older brother was diagnosed with a fatal cancer. And Patrick found himself needing to escape his daily life. So he quit the New Yorker, and he sought solace in this most beautiful place, the most beautiful place that he could think of in fact, what he doesn't realize is that this temporary refuge, which is what it was supposed to be becomes his home away from home for a decade, we watch as he bonds with the artwork that he's charged with protecting. We also learn a lot about that artwork. And he also bonds with the lively group of guards who share his mandate. It's a vibrant group of artists, musicians, blue collar workers, immigrants, and those like Patrick who just wanted to do what he calls worthy work all day as readers. We're so grateful he does this work and brings us along with him. All right. I read this because this is a buddy read with Roxanna, she brought

this to the table. I never would have When she said, Okay, it's a memoir. But I think you might find a lot here to be interested in. Because I do, I am very interested in art and art history. And so I was in it right from the beginning. I'd never heard of it, though. And it was such a fresh and interesting concept. So I fell into it with both feet. There's something about the simplicity of the circumstance. What Patrick Brinkley calls is days of simple, honest work that was totally fascinating and very calming to me. I also absolutely love the way that Patrick for most of the book writes about his time at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, there was something about his prose that reminded me of a more tolls writing in the Rules of Civility. The words are simple, but the way they go together is not simple at all. It's really beautiful. His writing, especially in the first third, and then in the last third of the book was that way, for me, I loved it. Also, especially in that first portion, we sit side by side with him as he lives through the last months of his brother's life, and then walks through his own grief, that section doesn't linger through the entire book, but you should know that it's there. The middle third was the hardest portion for me. And for Roxanna, both of us felt that he both slowed down in his writing style and lost some steam overall, this is the second third of the book. This is the portion where he talks about the latter half of his career at the Met. And he mentioned several times that during this period of time, he got if not less excited by the works of art surrounding him, then certainly he didn't have the passion that he had at the beginning. How could he but there was something in that middle section that was just a little bit off putting there were some sections where he just found myself feeling like I wanted to roll my eyes, like he was too aware of himself and what he was doing. And he also was being very writerly. In this middle portion, I felt that deeply. But then in the last third things started to soar once again. I especially loved the section where he talks about the big Michelangelo exhibit that came to the Met and all of his thoughts around the great master and his own thoughts about his work about how sometimes work is hard and boring, and makes us cranky, but we do it. And we do our best every day and are doing that every day equals a wonderful masterpiece. At the end that entire section about Michelangelo was luminescent to me. I love art, as I said, and I've always thought that if I were to go back to school and get another degree, I would want to get one in art history. So this book took me to some wonderful places where I could deep dive into the art and the artists and learn something new and be transported at the same time. This is a wonderful left turn in my reading. And I'm so glad that Roxanna took my hand and took me down that path. This is All the Beauty in the World. by Patrick Brinkley,

Kaytee Cobb 32:55

of course has you know, ups and downs even in review, but it sounds really good. I was really good in this one because of Gretchen Rubin, who goes to the Met every day and shared about this book, including the guard shadows on the wall. Have you seen that picture that she showed that she shared when she said I only saw these because Patrick Brinkley, you know, brought them to my attention in his book. And it's where basically the guards either hands or butts touched the wall. So there's like a shadow on the wall behind where they stand all the time. And I was like, Oh, how fun to get to go to a place you go every day and get to see something new because of a book you read. Yeah, I love that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 33:33

Yeah, yeah, there are all sorts of little those kinds of work place behind the scenes facts, like how they put up the exhibits. And there were just a lot of that all the way through. And again, the writing was really beautiful. I gave it 4.25 stars. So I really, really liked it, for sure. I just was aware in that middle section, but the first in the third section were luminescent. Okay, Kaytee, those are our current reads

lots of different kinds of books, which I love when we do that. So let's get into our deep dive, which is about the reading retreat that I just went on.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 33:34

Yes, in my notes. I called this reading retreat reconnaissance because the rest of us are basically spying on whatever you got to do this past week.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:03

Exactly. So I went on this reading retreat. There were four of us. So it was me, Betsy Ikenberry, Lexi, Largent, and glorious or Costa those names will be familiar to all the bookish friends because they're active in the currently reading bookish Friends Group, which is really how I got to know each of them, which is really amazing to me. We all happen to live close together. And then I got to know each of them in that way too. So again, books bringing us together and making our lives better. I love that there are four of us. We went to a an Airbnb that I searched for, and then we chose, you know, narrowed down and chose together and it was only about an hour and 15 minutes from where we live. So it wasn't too far. And it was on the lake, which was something that was really important to us. We wanted to have a really beautiful view out of most of our windows. So yeah, and we went for four days. So we went, we got there on a Tuesday afternoon, and we left late morning on Friday. That means that we had Tuesday night, and then we had all day, Wednesday, Thursday, and then, you know, kind of got up and had breakfast and took off Friday morning, but two full days to work. Our schedule, Kaytee. And the schedule was a very interesting part of the planning. Because I wasn't sure when they asked me to tag along and said they they heard me talking about it on the show. And they were like, Let's do a reading retreat. Let's see if we can make it work. I was like, I'm not even sure it's going to work at all. Because they were like, No, we really want a schedule. And I was like, but do you like I really, I really wasn't sure that normal people, which I'm not normal, I'm so weirdly scheduled. I was I wasn't sure that normals would actually want a schedule. When you're on a retreat, you're on a break, you're on a vacation for a few days away from your kids. Why would you want to be on a schedule? So I was I was not sure that that piece was going to work. But I am very happy to report that not only did I think it works, but as I mentioned it all things Murderful when I did kind of a mini deep dive into it, that two of us kind of skew very type A and two of us do not necessarily lead always with the type a part of our personalities. And so those two,

Kaytee Cobb 36:32

that is the nicest way to say that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 36:33

Yeah, no, because they're Fanta, I mean, like I these two people, I look at that. I'm like I so wish I were more like you like 100%. So they were saying we kind of took Wednesday night we kind of took stock and said okay, what pieces really worked, what pieces would we do again? What pieces would we change and the schedule was something that they were saying, I've been really surprised by how much the schedule has added to this experience. Now the schedule also became a joke, because Betsy, who is a dear dear friend of mine could not resist constantly teasing me about the schedule. Once we made it. Remember, they asked me to make it and then I made it. And then I got teased for it, which was hilarious. So Betsy ended up making graphics and printouts and bookmarks with the schedule, and

we're also going to have sweatshirts made it's a whole thing and go on the front it says forced reading retreat. You're gonna like it whether you like it or not. The front says. And then on the back we have our schedule. Okay, here's the schedule. I'm just going to read it down really quickly. 8:30am Breakfast 9am solitary reading time 11am Betsy put in these these adjectives. All I said was move your body question mark. She said mandatory exercise time. I never said it was mandatory. Boom. All right. Noon, healthy lunch. One o'clock, compulsory. Compulsory group book talk. Two o'clock cloistered reading time, four o'clock involuntary free time. This is where you can call home. She has a little five o'clock, obligatory group booked talk 6pm hearty dinner. 7pm enforced bedtime. Okay, that's all that's okay. I know, this was like the single biggest joke that we had. I never said enforced bedtime. I just said that was when the kind of plans for like the schedule part of the day was over, but

Kaytee Cobb 38:37
lights out women.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:39

Right. So of course, we did not. In fact, we went to bed really, really late several most of the nights so. But that middle part of the day, all joking aside, that middle part of the day actually worked really well. And we followed the schedule, what we did find is that I had put in two hour reading times what we did find is that we wanted each of those to be three hours. And then from because what we found is we got really good at each of us going to wherever in the house was we were going to get into the best comfy position for reading. Right. And then once we were really there, you can really sink into your books. And so what we found is that extra time was what we what we needed. And so we just would, you know, one day on Tuesday, in the afternoon, two of us were actually realizing, Hey, I'm just a couple minutes from finishing this book. So like I didn't come out of my room for that time until like close to the three hour mark because I was finishing Mouth to Mouth and so

Kaytee Cobb 39:36

so did you miss the next thing on the schedule.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:38

We just kind of like shuffled everything later because a couple of us had done that. So we just shuffled everything a bit later. And again, we weren't going to bed at seven o'clock so that you know we had the whole evening together. So what we found is that other than that one change. We really really liked the amount of time because then of course, Why wake up fairly early naturally. So I would get up and read for a half hour in bed before I would go in for breakfast. And then at night, you know, people could go to bed whenever they wanted to, and read for how long they want, so you can have more reading. So basically, if you know we would, on this retreat, we were having six to eight to nine hours of reading per day, which, of course, is never at the amount that we can do. I mean, that's completely way more than we can ever do in a day, we did decide that if we will do this, again, that we will probably opt for three days because at the end of the second day, we were like, Man, I could do this schedule for another day.

Kaytee Cobb 40:42

Great. Okay, Meredith, I'm going to take over as Interviewer Do it, because I have lots more things to ask about. So one of the things that I kind of bump up against a lot when I'm trying to do very scheduled

and very planned events with friends of this nature is eating. And you have the schedules on there for when it happens. But I am curious about was somebody in charge of cooking? Did you DoorDash every meal, that kind of thing, because that really plays into how much I enjoy my time away from my family. Yes.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 41:12

Very, very good question. And super important number. Remember, everything I'm talking about today is what worked for this group of people. Okay, so it will be different for every mix and match of people. So the kind of template I want to put you in is different things to consider when you're planning your reading retreat. First of all, there's no question that the food element is a key element because it plays into your enjoyment of it. So what we did in advance is we had a planning night, about three weeks before our trip, we all got together a besties house, and they laughed at me as I got out my notebook, they ended up being glad that I did this later. I know that they teased me about my shopping list and about all my requirements, but it totally worked out. And of course, we were all laughing about all of this. So all of this is tongue in cheek. They're awesome, awesome people.

Kaytee Cobb 42:02

I'm when I make like trip plans for our friends, I usually create a shared spreadsheet. And they're like, well just wait, Kaytee will send a spreadsheet for us all to put our meals and yeah, like cuz that's, that's my role.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 42:14

Exactly. So we got together and we talked by then we already had the place and the dates figured out. And that so the first thing that we said was, if you want to do this, you have to just do it. Like one person in the group has to say, give me some dates. Let's get some dates on the calendar. I'm booking the place. Yes, that's the role that I played that I think was the most helpful just to say like, boom, we're getting date. Once that happened, it all rocked and rolled really really really easily with everyone taking part in it and it just so they were like someone has to play that role of just saying this piece then we got together and we started saying okay, let's plan our meals. Let's plant you know so let's make a big list of what the food that we need because we were going to a place in Kingsland, Texas, which is actually not very far from a you know, fairly small grocery store. But we knew we weren't going to have a lot of DoorDash options. We knew that already. And so we just kind of planned our meals deciding on you know, we did pasta, Gloria's husband made a fantastic pasta meal for us one that she brought to for one of the nights then we just added some garlic bread and salad. And then the second night, we just did pizza and salad. We kept things really, really simple. We just did sandwiches and salads for lunch. We just did really simple things for breakfast, we had lots of snacky foods, lots of popcorn and chips and the things that we each like for snacking while we're reading coffee was really really important thing. So there were a lot of things you know, you have to your coffee or whatever drink you enjoy while you're reading or while you're relaxing. You got to get those pieces right, so we spent some time just planning that out and making one big master list and then from there, we kind of divvied up you know, each person was bringing a few things that they could easily get because oh I go to Costco or I you know, so we kind of divvied it up. I made a big, huge grocery order through heb which is our big store here in Texas. I planned on my way up there I just said okay, I'll do a curbside pickup at x time. So I drove about halfway and then stopped in Marble Falls did the the curbside pickup which was super

simple and easy. They put the groceries in the back of my car, drove another 20 minutes and then Betsy and I were there we unpacked everything and got the kitchen organized. And then by the time the other two got there we were sitting around just having book chat and everything else. And so that was how we handled food. Does that make sense to you? So everyone had definitely no let me tell you one thing that was totally great. Betsy brought what is called a Snackle box. I had never seen it before. She brought it because she used it at home and she was like I just cut up all these veggies like I do all the time. And I don't want them to kind of go on us so she brought this now this snack box ended up being My favorite part of what we ate because this is not groundbreaking, except for the ease and convenience, which made it so much more usable. So we took that snack box out at every meal every time we were standing in the kitchen having a snack, we ended up eating so many good quality vegetables and brought a couple good dips that we really liked. She gets this raspberry Chipotle dip at Costco, that is so so good. And we just snack. But we had lots of veggies and you know, so we weren't just eating crap the whole time. Right? We love that snack box. While we were there. I think we all ordered a snack box and my family is loving it now at home. So get you a snack,

Kaytee Cobb 45:38

legitimate product to product. That's his name for now.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 45:41

It's a six compartment snackable box that that's actually what it's called. And we'll put a link in the show notes because I bought one and it was at my house by the time I got back and I immediately filled it up. And now I say snackle box as much as possible at home.

Kaytee Cobb 45:55

Who doesn't love a good portmanteau? Honest. I love it like that. Fantastic. Yeah. Okay. I also am curious about it sounds like from the schedule that you read that there weren't any ancillary activities outside. He didn't go to bookstores or like, visit the lake or anything like that. You were very homebody the whole time.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:14

Kaytee, I'm gonna tell you, we, we didn't leave the house.

Kaytee Cobb 46:18

Okay. That's what it sounded like. Right. Right. So,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:21

yeah, I mean, that doesn't need to be the way it's done. It was just the way that this foursome wanted to do it based on the days that we had available and what we wanted to accomplish in those in those days.

Kaytee Cobb 46:34

Okay, so then for the hours that were set aside for book talk, was that like, how did your last reading session go? Was it you know, question cards that you went through and said, Who's your favorite, like, bookish crush? Like did you deep dive what what was going on during those chatty time, but

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:49

those are all some really interesting ideas, because Johnny was like, it would have been fun if all if you guys had started out with everyone reading the same book. And then you know, and I was like that book club it that's definitely one way that it could be done that I could see would be really fun. So Tuesday night, we, we hadn't planned this, but this is something we will do going forward. Tuesday night, the night we got there, kind of settled in and had some dinner. And then the other two joined us. And we all had brought way too many books. And book selection is a really, really big deal. For the book retreat. We brought way too many books because we're mood readers. We didn't want to be stuck, not having a book that was fitting the mood that we were in. So part of the reason why we loved going to a place that didn't require us to fly and was close to our house we all drove separately was that we had plenty of room. I mean, we brought with SUVs. So we had SUVs full of books, we had our piles, which after this episode drops, I'm going to do a set of stories around this because our piles of books are hilarious. And I want to see if people can guess whose piles belong to who. But Tuesday night, we got there. And we there was a lot of just random conversation. We're all good friends. But we also did a lot of talk about like we kind of were sitting in front of our book stacks. And we kind of were just having general book talk about the book stacks and what books we had read and what mood we were in and all of that. And then once we got to the two full days of the retreat, when we had this book talk would often be about what we were reading how that book was going, well, how are we feeling about it? How was it affecting our mood, how everything related to that. And then you know, conversation flows as it's going to flow. It wasn't it wasn't literally compulsory that we had to talk about books. But oftentimes during those breaks in between, we were talking about that we also really enjoyed like waking up and having breakfast together outside, we got some beautiful weather. So we were able to be outside for many of our meals, and we really enjoyed like having coffee and breakfast together. But then we would all be like, Oh, it's nine o'clock, let's go. And everyone would just be like we were, we knew that if we adhered to the schedule, we would get what we wanted out of that time. And we didn't want to let that time go. So yeah, book talk flowed. There was a lot of that. And then sometimes book talk led to deeper conversations that were much more personal. And you know how that goes. And so then it became, especially in the evenings, there was just, you know, long dinners, glass of wine, and we would just get into long conversations, some of which was bookish, and some of which would just lead to really deep personal conversations that by the time you get done with four days like that, you're like, Okay, I don't really know how to go home and live without you guys anymore. You know, like, just kind of great, super bonded. And so that that was our, you know, that was our experience.

Kaytee Cobb 49:39

Very nice. Okay, and one of the things that you and I have done when we've gotten together with bookish friends in the past is a book swap. Did anybody bring in their giant SUVs full of books, a pile of like, these are ones I'm done with? Do any of you want these for this weekend? Are you interested in this book?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:57

Yeah, we did have some of that week. We could have gotten bigger with it. But we did end up with some books that ended up being passed around and shared and kind of even started during that period of time that we hadn't planned on, like one person would finish it and had been talking so much the

other person's like, I think I want to read that next. Let me take that. Yeah, exactly. So we, so we definitely did that. And certainly, we also learned a lot more about each other's taste, and reading likes and dislikes. And that always really helps you to be able to recommend books to each other because you're like, Oh, I now know exactly. I have so much better idea about especially GLORIA And Lexi's taste, after all of this time together, because we just spent so much time talking about books and what's working for us and what isn't.

Kaytee Cobb 50:43

I love that I feel like that plays so well into not just The Life Council, which we were talking about, but Platonic as well, those fellow obsessive friendships that like the planner, the Yes friend that says, we're just going to go, we're just going to get it on the calendar, we're just going to make it happen. And it takes all kinds to make something like this happen. But anybody listening could find their people around them and make something like this happen, right? We see people in the bookish friends group all the time, say, is anybody in this area? Would you be interested in doing, you know, a meet up of some kind, those are the friendships that can turn into something like this, Katie and I did a retreat together about a year and a half ago now. And I ended up making a like a mini photo album for her at the very end of all the pictures that we had taken together while we were on this little trip to Pagosa Springs, Colorado, including our completely excessive piles of books that we brought along with us. Yeah, for this weekend, it was like two nights away. And that moment or that weekend is what really like brought us from Well, I think we're gonna be pretty good friends into, like Soul Sister status, where we really know and love each other in a different way than we did before. Yeah, exactly. It's

Meredith Monday Schwartz 51:57

a very, very bonding experience. And also, I want to say I want to leave room for the fact that there are a lot of different ways that you could of course, do what Elizabeth Barnhill does all the time, which is you could do a solo reading retreat and take a lot of the same things into that. And then you also could do a reading retreat, that doesn't have to be you know, because there has to be a level of knowledge of the other people to rent a house together. And we know each other before we want to undertake that. But you could all say like, Hey, who wants to, you know, go to this one particular hotel, and each of you get your own room. And maybe you just meet at certain times, and some of the shared common spaces. And there's a lot of hotels that have a lot of really homey, you know, kinds of places libraries, for example, where you could have that same kind of schedule, but you don't have to feel like you know them well enough to be renting a home together. So there's just a lot of different ways. You know, I think that if you want to take a reading retreat, like ours, a couple of the things that worked really well, for us from a location perspective, as I said, wasn't very far we were each able to drive there, that also meant that we got to listen to I finish the back half of a book on audio. So you have that driving time too, which adds to your your reading time. And also means that you can shove a bunch of books in your trunk and you know, take them there, the size of my suitcase was hysterical for the amount of time that we were there.

Kaytee Cobb 53:18

And so choosing because you didn't go anywhere. You could have worn like the same pants the entire weekend.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:24

I mean, I could have, but I wouldn't.

Kaytee Cobb 53:28

I would okay, if anybody feels like that was judgy, let me assure you that was not alright,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:32

I know. Let me say we were very much comfy pants and top knots and no makeup the entire time. I mean, it was very, like, sure, I was putting on clean clothes every 12 hours, but they might as well have all been the same clothes because it was all sweatshirts and comfy clothes there was I don't think I put on shoes for three days. So it was very, it was very low key. So the lake environment really, really worked for us. Again, it's really nice having that outdoor option we found it was great to have that outdoor indoor option. We also have the luxury and a lot of times with Airbnbs you can have this we had we each had our own room and bathroom and we ended up saying that was something that we really really loved because introverts you can do this kind of trip, I can tell you because you can have a lot of group time talk time. If you know that in an hour, you're gonna have three hours to recharge reading a book alone in a room and nobody is going to come like that reading time was sacrosanct. No buddy during that time was going to be like, you know, I wanted to ask Meredith a question. Or I wonder what Betsy thinks during that reading time unless your hair it was like a blood or vomit meeting which I talked about it here comes the guide. As far as telling my kids if you're not bleeding or vomiting, I don't want to hear from you. Those were the those were the rules. If you're not on fire, no one is going to interrupt So choosing people who will hold that standard is really really, really important if this is going to work well. One person not would have kind of changed the whole tenor of every real. Yeah. So for sure, we also found like said we had a location without a lot of distractions, we didn't go to downtown Austin, where there's a lot of things to do and see, we went to a place that lent itself to a reading retreat, because that's what we want to do. Now, that doesn't mean that girls trips that include some reading and other stuff aren't great. That just wasn't what we were trying to do. So a place with fewer distractions was helpful. We also one of the things you've heard me say, I think Airbnb should have a some sort of search filter that allows you to search for places, Airbnb that have great places to read, because that is a really key thing for you to be sure of when you rent your Airbnb, don't just look at does everyone have their own room and bathroom? Don't just look at the gorgeous Lake does, you know, you have to say there's a gorgeous Lake, does it have enough chairs, if all of us are out there at the same time chatting in the morning? Does each person have a private or private ish place where they can be not just reading in private but comfortable, which involves comfy chairs or a big couch? You need to think through all of that before you choose your location. Because if we had gotten in there, and there wasn't plenty of places for all four of us to relax and get really comfortable reading, we would have been in some trouble, you know. So that's something to really, really, really think hard about when you make your choices. And I went to the trouble of messaging my super host to say like, Hey, I just want to be absolutely sure. Are there enough comfy chairs and There ended up being that and there were lots of separate spaces so you can make a decision as to whether or not a couple people are able to read in the same space. There was a downstairs Lakeview really, really comfy area that Betsy and Lexi ended up kind of gravitating to, because they could be in the same room. But again, it was sacrosanct. They were reading and reading quietly one of them wasn't getting on the phone or taking a call. This was close to Silent time. So they were able to do that and make it work really well.

Kaytee Cobb 57:08

Good. Good.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 57:10

The one more thing that I want to say in addition to the snack box, I will say that next time we each of us will be bringing mug warmers. Uh huh. I don't know why I didn't travel I ended up miraculously for I have 11 For which of course, of course I could have brought one for everyone. It ended up magically that there was one mug warmer and it happened to me in the guest house that I was staying in. So I actually did have a mug warmer but I will not have that moment of panic ever again. Everyone was like I need a mug warmer so bring your mug warmer. Also, Betsy brought what she called a comfort basket. And I am bringing my own comfort basket next time. It's you know, whatever it is doesn't need to be a basket. Whatever container you want it to be in. GLORIA brought her comfiest most favorite reading blanket because she just knew she wanted she didn't want to be stuck without her reading blanket. That's something that adds to her reading experience. For me, it's a mug warmer, Betsy likes to have certain lights, certain lotions, certain you know she likes to She also brings her knitting just in case she wants to work on that while she's listening to an audio book, some air pods or your whatever your devices that you use, you know, that are going to make you comfortable anything, your favorite water bottle that you always like to have, by your side, make a comfort basket or comfort container. Because when you sit for three hours, multiple times over the course of two or three days, you want to be as comfortable as possible. So really think through what gets you into that reading zone.

Kaytee Cobb 58:40

That reminds me of having little littles and having like a nursing basket next to you where you were like, I need these items, always. And I want to be able to take it with me wherever I'm going to sit down to nurse. This is exactly the same principle. Right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 58:54

Exactly. And it it really, really makes a difference. It turns the experience from feeling like you're out and about and everything's not quite perfect to. Okay, this is like my perfect reading temperature and you know, everything, it just feels exactly right. And then you can really sink into your books. And that's the most important thing is that you get enough time to read that you feel like wow, I never get a chance to do that. And it was so recharging. I ended up finishing finishing three books over the course of that time. And I never finished three books in three days. It's the best. Yeah,

Kaytee Cobb 59:32

it's it's so great. Yeah, I love it so much. Yeah.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 59:36

So that's a reading retreat. Done. Meredith style.

Kaytee Cobb 59:39

I'm gonna add this. I don't know if you want to talk about this too. But when you were talking to Elizabeth, you mentioned Death at the dive bar. Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah. So when I went on Amazon to link that, I bought that in June, like Prime Day of 2021. I think that was your birthday. One year.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 59:57

I think it was. I think you're absolutely right. Yes.

Kaytee Cobb 59:59

I was like, Wait, I don't own this game. Did I buy this already? Already in my Amazon account?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:00:05

I think that you did, I think and it was so much fun. So yeah, on the Tuesday night again, not enforced bedtime, Betsy. We got to stay up like big girls. And I was like, Yes, I bought this Hunter Killer game. I didn't buy it Kaytee bought it for me and I brought it and it's you can buy it like a target or Amazon. And it's just a short compared to the real Hunter Killer projects that span you know, weeks and months. But this is just made to be done in an evening by one or more people. And I wasn't sure that I would want to do it. I wasn't sure that every that everyone would want to do it. It ended up being so much fun. So if you are if you're going with a group of people who like the kind of like murder for this wasn't super graphic or gory at all, it was very tame on those. But it was, like, interesting and complex enough that we had to do some work like it wasn't stupid. Like we were really doing some work. We ended up solving the case I am proud to say, of course,

Kaytee Cobb 1:01:06

but I expected nothing. Absolutely.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:01:08

I mean through Lexi's just Code Cracking abilities and glorious crack ability to look at photos and see things that I sure as hell didn't see. Like that. I was like, I'm so glad that you guys are here.

Kaytee Cobb 1:01:21

They're very good detective even looking of hints. Somebody told me how to solve

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:01:25

right at the very end, there was one thing that we needed a hint on. But once we had that hint, we flew through it and then we weren't completely sure of our answer. So that was a really fun thing. So whatever game is interesting to you, if that's the kind of thing you know, you have an evening to play whatever kind of game or watch whatever kind of movie everyone's interested in. You do whatever you enjoy doing. We just ended up talking a lot. If we weren't playing that game. We just we talked our our ears off.

Kaytee Cobb 1:01:53

Thankfully, still fully functional, though, because here we are exactly recording a podcast, Kevin.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:01:58

All right, Kaytee. So yeah, I'm going to do a story. I'm going to upload a bunch of photos, we'll have some links to the things that we talked about in the show notes. And if you have any questions, DM me directly through the show, and they will get that to me. And we can talk about how you might want to do your reading retreat. I love the idea of Roxanna was like, what if there was a job that was just about planning, reading retreats, and I'm like, Oh, my Lord, Sign me up. That sounds so perfect.

Kaytee Cobb 1:02:25

Yes, I agree.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:02:28

All right, let's talk about our wishes at the fountain. What's your wish today?

Kaytee Cobb 1:02:32

Okay, actually, my wish, I made it kind of thinking I was going to talk to you and ask you some questions about the reading retreat, but I think it would have worked, especially if you had some people that were easily misdirected on your reading retreat. So my wish this week is a new invention. I like coming up with new inventions. This is a little out there. But I have spent plenty of cash dollars on different tools and techniques to make it possible to read while also being physically present with my people. So I've mentioned my neck book late before my noise cancelling headphones. Both of those things make it possible for me to lay on the couch next to Jason, and be reading my book and not involved in whatever he's watching on TV, because I can like kind of seal myself away. The next thing I want and need. I'm calling reader blinders. So these are like what horses wear right. But they're their glasses. And hypothetically, because AI is getting so smart. They're AI glasses, so they just look like regular glasses, but they have this ability to filter out distracting things in your visual field. So the flicker from the TV or the child that's not bleeding or vomiting that's trying to get your attention. And they they help you be able to say like, I don't need all this other noise and visual stimulation around me I just want to be able to sink fully into my book because technology has made it very easy to distract ourselves from reading and I feel like now it needs to pull its weight and make it easier for us to on distract ourselves from reading. So I want like horse blinders, reader blinders in order to be able to visually sink in better to my book when there is distraction happening around me. I love it

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:04:13

reader blinders sets reader blinders that sounds absolutely perfect. It reminds me of Johnny and I came up with the kid nap hat, which is what we would do to Jackson when he was like riding in a car and he just couldn't go to sleep. So we would put like a regular like, like a stocking like a stocking cap. And we would just put it down over his head he could still breathe like we were he was old enough like he's not this is not when he was an infant. Okay, so he was perfectly safe all the time. But when we would put that down over his eyes, all of a sudden he could sleep in the car so we called it a kid nap hat but then it's also a kidnap Pat because it's so but this I mean, this is the reader version of that. I love it. Yeah.

Kaytee Cobb 1:04:54

And then your blinders, it just helps you like focus in on what you need to be working on.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:05:00

I love it. I love it. All right, my fountain wish is that absolutely everyone could have the experience that I had this last weekend when I am happy to report to you guys. Roxanna and I recorded the first episode of a journey to Three Pines. Yes, I realized this has taken time for us to get off the dime after we had the idea and announced it to everybody. But this is what happens when you have crazy busy lives. Sometimes things have to give. But we recorded the first episode and it was such a great experience. Kaytee we it was what we always wanted to do to deep dive deep, deeply explore the first book in the series still life obviously, we were really happy with our format. It ended up being V long, though. Like it was 90 100 100 minutes, or 500 It was really long. But we like we stayed with her format, there was just a lot to say. So I'm choosing theme music, which is making me super nervous because I feel like I'm gonna get it wrong and I still want to get it right. But all of that to say that within the next week or two, the first episode of Journey to Three Pines should be out. My hope my wish is that everyone who is interested will listen and and let us know what they think whether they love it or not, we definitely want to hear that. And then also get you a friend that you can have deep bookish conversation about one of your favorite books with because it is such a joyful experience to be able to just really, really get into the weeds on a book that means a whole lot to both of you. So I'm excited about a journey to three pints coming really soon. You guys

Kaytee Cobb 1:06:40

really soon be patient.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:06:41

We will as we record now. It's possible it could be out already. Yeah,

Kaytee Cobb 1:06:45

it'd be there. You there just came out last Friday.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:06:49

Right? Exactly. Barring anything unforeseen that should that should be the case. Alright, that is it for this week. As a reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me on Meredith at Meredith dot reads on Instagram.

Kaytee Cobb 1:07:01

And you can find me at kaytee at notes on bookmarks on Instagram.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:07:05

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 at currently reading podcast.com.

Kaytee Cobb 1:07:14

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Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:07:21

And if you want more of this kind of content, join us as a bookish friend on Patreon. It's only \$5 a month and you get a ton more from me and Kaytee, you also keep this show ad free. You can shout us out on social media and rate and review us on Apple podcasts too. Both of those things make a huge difference in our being able to find our perfect audience.

Kaytee Cobb 1:07:44

bookish friends are the best friends. Thank you all for helping us grow and read and enjoy our reading lives and get closer to our goals.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:07:53

Until next week. May your coffee be hot.

Kaytee Cobb 1:07:55

And your book be unputdownable

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:07:57

Happy reading Katie.

Kaytee Cobb 1:07:58

Happy reading Meredith

Kaytee Cobb 1:08:08

we are light on the book talk. Nope.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:08:12

Lucky podcast heavy on the chit chat. Yeah,

Kaytee Cobb 1:08:18

we just talked about nothing all day long. Okay.