



# Season 6, Episode 1: What We Did On Our Summer Break

Mon, Aug 07, 2023 • 53:22

**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'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 chitchat 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 baking in Austin, Texas. And I give myself permission in my reading to change.

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:42

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in Arizona. And I am so excited to see what this new season brings. This is episode number one of season six. And we are so glad you're here. I just got goosebumps, Meredith.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:58

I know it's really fun when you do make a big move. It's really fun to add that to your intro for the first time. I remember when I did that in Austin. And just so I'm clear, I'm baking because it's so hot. Not like physically baking baked goods. I realized that

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:10

was the worst idea ever. Yeah, exactly,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 01:14

exactly. But it's hot where you are too in Phoenix,

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:17

it is very hot. And it was a big change for us. It's like a solid 30 degree swing from the highs of Santa Fe, New Mexico to the highs of Phoenix, Arizona. And it's not a good 30 degree swing. It's the bad way.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:30**

Ya know, when we moved from the Northern California Bay Area to Austin, it was that same thing, I found that we got used to it really, really quickly. Good air conditioning is key. And I think you're finding the same thing. Definitely. All right, good. So a couple of things. We are in the very first episode of season six, which is very exciting. And it's the first episode of the month. So you'll know exactly what that means. That means we need to do the one and only ad that you will hear on the Currently Reading podcast for the entire month, we only do one, and it is an ad for ourselves and what we're doing on Patreon. And I want to talk specifically to just two groups of people. As I talked about joining us on Patreon, it's \$5 a month. Okay, so but here's my pitch to these two groups of people. Number one, if you are one of the 100,000 people who download this podcast every month, and you thought last week, when it was our dark week, we didn't have an episode you thought I really wish there was an episode of Currently Reading. Well, there is 150 pieces plus of content over on our Patreon that you get as soon as you join us, you will never be without a piece of content again, if you spread them out properly. Alright, so definitely that's worth \$5 a month, I always know you have an episode to listen to. Also, if you were one of the many people who reached out to us and told us you loved the listener press episode. And you thought I love having books pressed into my hands. Well, what if every single month you could have a fantastic bookstore, press five books into your hands and then you could support them by maybe deciding to buy through a link that you follow? That's what you get through the indie press list, our flagship piece of content that we offer, we do a lot of other content, but the indie press list guarantees you five new, fantastic books to consider every single month. So that's my pitch. If you have ever thought either one of those two things, now is the time to go to [patreon.com/currently Reading](https://patreon.com/currentlyreading) podcast and join us for just \$5 a month. It's stupid cheap for all you get

**Kaytee Cobb 03:37**

is it's a lot of really great content and great community. So even if you have heard of Indie Press List books, there might be a bookish friend that wants to press things into your hand. And they do that all the time on our Patreon group on our Facebook group. It's pretty fantastic.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:52**

Exactly so many reasons to join us. Alright Kaytee we have one more piece of administration that we want to cover before we dive in.

**Kaytee Cobb 04:00**

Yes, we have an announcement a little more mischief to manage. If you were listening to the last regular episode of season five, you heard us forcefully press books into each other's hands. And you might be wondering, Wait, are we going to get a follow up on that today? No, dear reader, you have to wait one more week to hear about what Meredith thought about Chain Gang All Stars and what I thought about Fates and Furies. So we are going to follow up on that we did not forget it's coming. You just have to wait one more week for episode two of season six.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:29**

Exactly. We are both ready to roll on that. I cannot wait to have that conversation. Okay, our deep dive today is going to be what we always start the season off with and that is a report on what we did on our summer break. Kaytee, you and I had about five weeks off from doing the regular show. We had a lot of time in between. So we want to get caught up on what happened during that time. Yeah,

**Kaytee Cobb 04:51**

it's one of the very Schooley things that we do on the show. We're like okay, you back to the season. What did you do during your summer vacation? Let's write an essay.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 05:00**

No, I love it. I love it. Okay. All right. Before we do that, let's get started the way we always do with our bookish moments of the week.

**Kaytee Cobb 05:07**

All right, my bookish moment this past week, we evaded that 30 degree temperature swing, and we went up to Payson, Arizona to escape the heat of the Phoenix area for a few days, because we live here now. But as of this recording, we're still breaking records for temperatures this summer. It is very, very hot highs over 110 for more than 30 days in a row at this point. Up at my parents house in Payson, there's no Internet, and there's a VCR and so many VHS tapes. It's like traveling back in time to the 80s and 90s. It's a delight. My kids were obsessed with the VHS tape rewinder that looks like a car. So they would slide the VHS tape in and push it down and it would rewind the tape for you. Because otherwise you have to leave it in the player and you can't start the next movie right. Included in that VHS collection is the 1985 miniseries adaptation of Anne of Green Gables with Megan follows. So of course, I'm well documented as loving this book, and my kids have liked the graphic novel adaptations of it. My husband has never read or watched it. So while I took a trip down memory lane and had to restrain myself from spoiling all the lines, they all got to experience this masterpiece of film for the first time, including the fact that sometimes the tape quality was not that great because of how much I watched and rewatched those tapes as a kid they would like stretch a little bit in the scenes. I really loved a little bit of warbling happening a little bit of wobble in the sound quality it was and they were like, Why is it doing that? And I got to explain that because they they just don't know like kids don't know about VHS tapes anymore. So all of it was an exploration of delight and one of my favorite literary and TV masterpieces.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:44**

Oh, good. Well, that sounds like the perfect way to spend summers summer hours. Nice and cool. Watching Anne of Green Gables. That's perfect. All right, well, my bookish moment of the week is really just something that I've been thinking about a lot over the month, which is largely the month of July that we were not recording. I felt myself all of a sudden, really not wanting to read books that were dark, or violent in any way. And I was like, this is weird. I mean, normally dark and violent is my bag, right? It's my jam. I have an entire mug in our merch store that says scary books are my jam. Well, all of a sudden, I just was feeling my little tender heart just seemed like a tender mood. I hate the word tender. I hate that word. But that's how I was feeling. And there wasn't any like, situation making me feel that way. So all of a sudden, I was like what's going on? I haven't figured it out exactly. But what I did figure out much quicker than in years past. I just went with it. And I just said to myself, You know what? Yeah,

that book. I just picked up the new book by Chandler Baker. I think it's called Cutting Teeth. And I was so looking forward to it. I've been so I loved her book, The Husbands and it's like about baby vampire. Vampirism is no but but like cloaked in social commentary and domestic drama. That's my bag, I started reading it, I was like, Oh, I just I'm loving this book, I'm gonna love it at a different time. My heart cannot take it right now. So I just very politely closed that book, patted on its little self and said, I know you're going to be a good fit for me, but not right now. And I just put her up on my dark and gory shelf, and walked away and went back to Covenant of Water because that's been my jam. So understanding who we are as readers in general, and also in the ebbs and flows of the moment, I think is really, really important. And I'm just trying to be really present in that so that I make good choices for myself.

**Kaytee Cobb 08:47**

I think that's a great idea. That's one of the best ways to avoid trying to force yourself into a reader box and like becoming slumpy or spiteful in your reading and just saying this is another thing that is my trash because it sounds like everything else I read, you know, like that's what happens if we keep trying to plow that same row over and over again. Right, exactly.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:05**

I'll just get stuck behind a book. So Okay. All right, Kaytee, let's start talking about current reads. What's your first current read this week?

**Kaytee Cobb 09:12**

Okay, Meredith, I have a few wild swings in my reading this week. So to get into this, my first one is Nigeria Jones by Ibi Zoboi. So this is the newest novel from the author of one of my all time favorite books, which is called Pride. It's a retelling of Pride and Prejudice. I wasn't sure exactly what to expect from this one but I grabbed the galley based on author name alone and admittedly a little bit the cover the covers really pretty. It's like sparkly gold. It reminds me of Gustav Klimt, The Kiss that painting that it's gold everywhere around it, and oh yes, you're being drawn in because of the gold. So here's the setup. Nigeria Jones is a late high schooler and her world was recently up ended by the disappearance of her mother right after her baby brother was born. It has her stepping into the role of caregiver of an infant when she's still basically a child herself. Our story starts on July 4, when her brother turns one year old. She's sure her mother will not miss his first birthday, but she doesn't show up. Her continued absence has Nigeria distrusting her father, who is the leader of in caps The Movement. It's a Black Power group. It maintains that the best way for Black and white people to interact is to not interact at all to just be separate from each other. The children of this group are homeschooled, the diet is vegan, and the days are filled with rituals connecting the community to their ancestors. When Nigeria finds a letter from her missing mom, it mentions that she wants her to attend a private Quaker school outside of the movement. Her father disapproves vehemently. But Nigeria finds ways to attend the school with her cousin without her father's permission, and her ex best friend forming new connections in her increasingly isolated life. The crux of this novel is a mystery about what happened to Nigeria's mother. And as she gets closer to finding the truth, she realizes that everything she thought she knew could be a lie, because it's why this book is about figuring out who you are, and where you fit, regardless of what you were told and who you were brought up to be. She is raised as like, the successor to the movement, and she's not sure if that's what she wants her role in life to be. Its ya, which is obvious from the setup, and it does include some angst and some really bad decisions like Meredith, I can picture

you throwing this book and saying, No, ma'am, you are not allowed to just make decisions any way you please, please consult me first, which means that it's not going to be a YA book for everyone. But for me, the pages really flew by and I did end up giving it four stars and I found it to be pretty enjoyable overall. So that was a decent hit from a favorite author, Nigeria Jones by Ibi Zabo and

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 11:55

you are right, that is one gorgeous cover.

**Kaytee Cobb** 11:59

Pretty that is really pretty. Yeah.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 12:02

Okay. All right. I'm bringing a couple of books and my current reads that are coming that either just came out to have waiting with them because I wanted to bring them you know, when they just came out, or were just coming out. So I've got a couple of those. The first one is one that I've been really excited to talk about. It is *The Trap* by Catherine Ryan Howard. This just came out last week on August 1, and you guys know my love for Catherine Ryan Howard. She is one of my absolute favorite authors, a fantastic individual and her books I wait with bated breath. So here's the setup. We have three points of view in Catherine Ryan Howard's latest novel. One year ago, Lucy sister Nikki left to meet friends at a pub in Dublin and never came home. Nikki is the third Irish woman to vanish inexplicably in three years and the not knowing what happened that night is more than sister Lucy can stand so she decides she's going to go out and find out what happened for herself. Our other lead characters Angela, who works as a civilian paper pusher in the Missing Persons Unit, but she wants nothing more than to be a fully fledged member of the police force. With the official investigation into the missing women stalled. Angela begins pulling on a thread that breaks the case wide open. Finally, we're following a nameless man who drives through the night with his latest victim in the backseat. He's going to tell her and us everything from the beginning. Won't that be fun? This book is all kinds of fun. Her books. I can't wait to get my hands on them because I never know what the next book is going to be. Like she never writes the same book twice. And I love that about her that she is not formulaic. And there's no question that with the trap, she again has brought us something different than in her previous novel runtime. These books are very, very different. And for a lot of people, that is going to be a good thing. *The Trap* is a return to Catherine Ryan Howard's more signature crime fiction style. This one reminded me of her other novels *Rewind* and *The Nothing Man* especially we've got our rotating points of view, short chapters, and several places where I thought one thing was happening. But it turned out it was something else entirely but because CRH is so smart. It's something that made perfect sense. This is classic Howard style. I always think of her telling us I think what does the reader think I'm trying to do and how can I mess with them. But she always does it in a fair way. And something that's super fun in *The Trap*. If you have read all of her other books as I have you are going to find several easter eggs. She does such a good job of putting these little hat tips in there. As we know she doesn't write series books. She has told us she will never write a series but she does set her books within the same world and it is so fun to watch that develop up as we read her books, as I said, I liked the story a lot. It was perfect summer mystery reading, it's smart and propulsive and keeps you guessing. While I don't think this is a groundbreaking book, I do think that all of her readers will like this one, much more than they

liked runtime. Although I liked both of those books. I think you'll like this one, too. It's *The Trap* by Catherine Ryan Howard.

**Kaytee Cobb** 15:23

That does sound like it has the essential flavor of her writing. Yeah, I can hear some of the tie ins to other books without being like, Oh, well, that sounds like a repeat of, you know, this plot or whatever. So she's really good at coming up with a new thing. And still having it be like, but this is my style, and you will get what you expect from me. Right? Right. Exactly.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 15:43

So smart and those constructions you just never know what she's going to do. It just gets her writing continues to be really fresh.

**Kaytee Cobb** 15:51

Nice. Okay. My next one this week is a buzzy book. It's called *The Wishing Game* by Meg Schaffer. I've seen it everywhere I have. It's everywhere. It feels like it is everywhere. It's on the top of so many lists of books for book lovers. The feel good novel of the summer, the maybe my favorite book of the year lists. It's got a lot of positive vibes out there. So I'm going to tell you about my experience. Okay, here's the setup. Our main character is Lucy Hart. She had a tough childhood and was mostly raised by her grandparents as her parents directed their attentions and affections toward her chronically ill older sister. She now works as a teacher's aide, and is attempting to save up money for a few reasons. First is that she'd like to attend teaching school and become a fully certified teacher. More important to her though, is the fact that she wants to save up money in order to afford a better car and apartment in order to foster one of her students. His name is Christopher and he has been struggling through the foster care system. But Lucy has been a constant in his life through many years. When she's invited to participate in a game being hosted by one of her favorite authors from childhood. She knows that the prize would make her financially secure enough to be able to foster and then hopefully adopt Christopher. So she travels to Maine in order to take part in the competition. She's reintroduced there to Jack Masterson, the reclusive author of the clock Island mystery books. Jack hasn't written anything in many years. His books are like the magic Treehouse books. Sometimes they're a bit scary. Things always turn out okay. This book is an homage to readers that read under the covers until well past our bedtimes. It's for the adults who found companionship and comfort in books as kids and are now grown readers. If that's all it was a frothy little adventure novel, I would have no issues with it. And it seems like it ticks that box for most readers. As of today, when we're recording it had 4.3 stars on Goodreads. People love this book, remarkably high. However I threw this book when I finished it. I was irate as a reader and really have some big words about it. So for me, this book had three big issues. None of these are spoilers. First is that it clearly was not well edited. The way sentences are structured, the copy errors, the repetitive nature of the writing, which I can look past all of that if I'm really enjoying a story, but I could not look past it in this case. The second issue, which is the biggest one for me, was that the foster and adoption storyline which is a major central portion of the novel is so rose colored, I would call it harmful Having held hands through the years with foster parents, bio parents, adoptive parents, as they each watch through that system and dealt with the difficulties of getting kids into the right home. while also trying to preserve families. I feel like the author here really glossed over the major difficulties in the system. And her authors now even says I chose to focus on the hopes and

dreams and wishes of a child in foster care more than the intricacies of a very complicated system. She's like, I know it's hard. I didn't want that. So I just chose to ignore it. This glosses over so much and makes the plot of the book feel like money solves everything. As soon as you have money, you can get the child you wanted to foster. Everything's gonna be fine. La de freaking da. It infuriated me. Third comes from my conversation with our dear Mary Heim about this book, we discussed the characters, the long term trauma that both Lucy and her hopeful adoptive son Christopher have dealt with, and the ways that it seems like everything is now okay at the end of the novel. Nobody's doing therapy. Nobody's doing the work. They're just moving forward. They're forgetting the past. They're overcoming their anxiety. They're getting past it and everything's fine. It is infuriating. It has been quite some time since I really wanted to just fully chuck a book across the room when I finished it. But this one has now taken that top spot, possibly even dethroned the previous four runner in this category, which was Everything I Never Told You by Celeste Ng I have big feels about it and they are not positive. But I am so glad that other people are loving this Look, I am not ever saying you can love this book, even if I hated it, or vice versa. Maybe we all find books that make us feel that way. Like it's a huggable balm to your soul. It reaches the tender part that Meredith sometimes doesn't want to read tender and doesn't like to use that word. And it hits that spot exactly perfectly. For me, it was a big fat no. It's The Wishing Game by Meg Schaffer. Okay,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 20:25

two things. When you started, what you were gonna say about this book, I thought what you were gonna say is that you'd been seeing everywhere that people really didn't like it, because I've seen it everywhere. And the majority of the people that I follow have been ratatataouilling the book, throwing it against

**Kaytee Cobb** 20:42

I can't find these people anywhere. They're hiding from me, ya know. And

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 20:45

to the point where I got it, somehow I received it, I didn't order it myself. But I received it. And I just immediately put it on the stairs, which is where the last stop before my donation like I didn't even didn't even go on my shelf. That's how much negative I had seen about it. Interesting. Now, my question is, if someone is feeling very tender would this be? I mean, because we, as you said, we're always looking for how a book hit us, but then also where it might be a good fit for somebody else, a different kind of reader a different mood, a reader might be in would this be if you just, if you're needing something hopeful and redemptive and only positive? Would it be good for that mood,

**Kaytee Cobb** 21:24

it would be especially if you don't have any connections whatsoever to childhood trauma, or foster care or adoptive processes, because that's where it really just goes off the rails, I think, I think the reason I see a lot of people really loving it is because it does tick a lot of those childhood nostalgia boxes where, you know, you have this author you loved and then you get to go visit his house and you get to participate in a mystery, like you're part of the books that he wrote that changed your life and gave you hope when you were lonely. And so there's a lot of really great elements in it that people are connecting with. That's why it has such great ratings on Goodreads. But I think if there's any tenderness around

any of those core issues, it's going to be a hard read. It's going to either you're going to either DNF it or you're going to be real mad at the end like I was so yeah,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 22:18**

well, that's useful for people to know, all of that information is useful for people to know about whether or not it's the right fit for them. Good. All right. Well, I do have a book if you are in that tender space, and this episode is going to win the prize for how many times we've said that horrible word, including me saying it over and over again. And again. This is because of the time of year that we're in. I wanted to talk about a book that I read and loved five stars September by Rosemunde Pilcher. I love this book. I love me some Rosamunde Pilcher. Here's the setup. I literally sat in front of my computer and thought and thought and thought about how I wanted to set up this book, and I came up with a few ways to do it. But really, the best way is to go into this book blind, you really don't need to know very much. It's a Rosamunde Pilcher novel set in Scotland. So you're going to have lots and lots of gorgeous local color, both literally and figuratively. You're going to get cozy homes, stately mansions and fields of Heather know this going in. I bring this book because our story begins in May. It finishes in September. That's why it gets the title. But summer is the time to read it. It's very much a summer book to me. Also, this novel was written in 1990. And it's billed as a loose sequel to The Shell Seekers, which you know, I read last summer and absolutely loved. And it's really only connected by the appearance of one character. But the feeling of both books. If you liked the feeling of the shell secrets, you will like September September is a gentle family saga involving lots of families within a small Scottish town, the inciting event at the start is that they're beginning to plan a huge elaborate party that will take place in the village in September, the families some rich, some poor, some happy some not all spend the summer variously going through their lives as we careen toward that final night in the heart of September. All right. In the back of the book, I read and I purposely get Rosamunde Pilchers books from Half Price Books because I want the oldest most 80s copy I can find. I need that like I just pulled it off my mom's nightstand feeling okay, I succeeded and I found the most 80s copy of September. The back of the book says September's a novel to be savored a curl up under the covers kind of old fashioned read hardly anyone knows how to write anymore, is a book to be savored and cherished not just in September, but in any month of the year. And this was definitely my experience. This book seems and feels very singular to me. It's not at all like the other books I've read all year long. In the same way that Shell Seekers was singular. It's special, even though it feels very pedestrian, the chapters fly by and you're not even really sure why you're so interested because there aren't a lot of big things going on. I also really love how most of the people in these books are good, normal people, they participate in their lives in constructive ways. They might argue with each other, but then they make up and they are authentic and communicative in a straightforward way. There are no games being played for the most part. And that is so refreshing. This is not a rich people behaving badly family drama, which feels like the only kind of family drama we get. Now, presently, I guess, as I say, here in my notes, I guess this book could be called a family drama and that we're reading about a family but their drama doesn't feel toxic. Instead, it feels like the things we deal with every day, although maybe they deal with them a little bit better. And then you get to the back third of the book, and the action really takes off. We go from something comforting and prosaic to all of a sudden things are going faster and faster and things are getting harder and harder and more and more surprising. But isn't that how life is sometimes even with that? There's Rosamunde Pilcher right by our side as we walk through everything, making sure that we don't forget the things we're supposed to always remember when life gets hard.



And I think that's what I like most about these books *Shell Seekers* and *September*, they're family dramas, but they also feel like they are books that are meant to if not teach us something than to remind us of the important things in the most gentle and loving way possible. Kind of like how a really smart grandmother might tell you a story. I do want to say that there's one major way that this book doesn't age well. And that is in its treatment of mental illness. There are two characters who are struggling with these issues, and they are not getting the help or the empathy that we would give them today. This didn't affect my enjoyment of the book, as I see it in the context of its time, but these issues are especially triggering if you have walked through any of them in your own lives. And for that reason, proceed with caution. Overall, though, this was another singular five star read for me. This is *September* by Rosamunde Pilcher,

**Kaytee Cobb** 27:05

so glad you loved it and that they continue to be exactly the type of book you're looking for when you pick up these books.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 27:13

This is the kind of mood I've been in. This is that is my mood from July. I've wanted a big huge chunker with that kind of mood.

**Kaytee Cobb** 27:21

Well then I'm glad that you just keep circling back to *Covenant of Water* and everything that slow but steady because that makes me very happy to I finished it over the summer also, but I'm not gonna bring it to the show because I know that it's going to come up from Meredith So I'm going to keep my thoughts to myself.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 27:35

It is gonna come but I do I am interested in talking about it and seeing what you thought of it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 27:39

Definitely. Okay, my third one is also a pretty new release. I had three new releases this week. I'm going to talk about *The Adventures of Amina El Sirafi*, by Shannon Chakraborty. Oh, yes. So I went, this is a big swing from a one star book to a five star book. I can't wait to tell you about this one. I don't have a lot of words written down in my notes because I was worried that I was gonna just gush for 12 minutes about this one, so I'm gonna try and keep it concise. *Amina El Sirafi*, our protagonist is a retired pirate. She has sailed the Indian Ocean for many years, but is now content to stay home and raise her daughter in peace. But she had a crewmen die at sea, and when his mother tracks her down to offer her a job with a jaw dropping amount of money attached to it, as well as any additional treasure she finds along the way, it's an offer she cannot refuse. It would set her up for the rest of her life. It would allow her to reconnect with her old crew, it would give her a reason for one last adventure. So she takes on the job. And this novel is the story as she tells it to a scribe who is recording her adventures. That means that sometimes the scribe breaks the fourth wall to tell us what she's observing as the story goes on. And I've got it on good authority from my bookish friend Candace that the audio is exceptionally well done in that regard. Like you get to experience the room around them as they're having this conversation. I read it in paper, so I didn't get to hear that part of it. But I've heard the audio

is fantastic. As Amina gets into her story and her adventure, we learn about her previous quests, and we also unravel a mystery around the current one. This missing girl who she's seeking is definitely more complicated than just a kidnapped daughter of a rich lady. The task gets riskier and riskier, but the money continues its siren call in her ears and she can't resist it. This author of Shannon Chakraborty is the same Chakraborty who wrote the City of Brass, which Roxanna and Meredith discussed toward the end of season five. She is a scholar of Islamic history, and weaves the folklore and culture seamlessly into her novels. This one was propulsive and beautiful and I read the whole thing on paper because I just couldn't stop myself from devouring huge chunk at a time. It's more than 400 pages. But I read it in about 24 hours, I won't stop I was just obsessed with it. This book has girl power in droves, fantastical elements of demons and other worlds. It's phenomenal and gorgeous. And my copy I'm happy to brag about is from Fairyloot, which means it's even more gorgeous than the other ones that are on the shelves. It has a full color map. It has a gorgeous octopus sprayed on to the edges of the book. Wow. So I'm doubly obsessed. Of course, it's going directly on to my keeper shelf, and I'm so glad that it was part of my subscription with them. It is a setup for you can tell at the end of the book that she is setting up for many more adventures with Amina El Sirafi as the protagonist. You can read this one and pretend they sail off into the sunset and that's the end of the story. You don't have to It's not like and to find out how that battle ended, you must pick up book two. That's not what's happening here. But if you do love it and get sucked in the story and love Amina and her girl power and her crew, oh my gosh, her crew is amazing, then you know that there's more adventures to come in this world. With this captain, this fierce pirateless who tackles the sea and makes it submit to her in ways that are just fantastic. I loved this book five fantastic stars. It's The Adventures of Amina El Sarifi, by Shannon Chakraborty.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 31:24

Oh, I'm so glad that that was good. And now I feel like so many trusted readers, I know have read that, in fact, Roxanna is reading it right now loving it, and have read it and really, really loved it. I've also heard you know, I, I really liked City of Brass and kind of like you're saying, I got to the end of the first book and felt that I knew obviously, there were more books in the series. But I felt like I also could stop there with my reading and be satisfied. I've also heard that this latest novel is a little bit easier to get into than City of Brass, which should see that, you know, like the world building was a little bit quicker. And that well, that's always a good thing for me too. So I've heard wonderful things about it. I have that on my shelf. I cannot wait to read that one.

**Kaytee Cobb** 32:04

So good. I'm gonna have to send you videos of my copy. It's well, it's packed somewhere. I'll send them to you in a month. But it's so good. It's so gorgeous. I love it.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 32:13

Oh, I love it. Okay, all right. Well, my third book is a complete left turn from my second book, these two books could not be any more different. I want to talk about a book called Mister Magic by Kiersten White. This is a book it actually comes out tomorrow if you're listening to this as it as it drops live. Here's the setup. 30 years after a tragic accident shut down the production of the classic children's program Mr. Magic, the five surviving cast members have done their best to move on. The cast, which

in the show were known as the circle of friends haven't had the easiest time of things since the show abruptly shut down and they think back on their time together fondly. But there are strange things about the show Mr. Magic strange, even for a show filmed in the 90s. For example, there's no surviving video of the show at all. Nowhere, there are no records of it at all. There is no evidence of who directed it or produced it. And there are no records of who portrayed the enigmatic host, Mr. Magic, nothing. It's like it didn't exist, then circumstances bring the circle of friends again, they're now in their late 30s back together at a remote desert filming compound, the same one that they knew so well from their childhoods. Even though they haven't seen each other for years, they pick right up where they left off. It's almost too easy. After all, they're the only ones who hold the secret of that circle, the mystery of the Magic Man in his mysteriously black cape, and maybe the answers to what really happened on that deadly last day. I think the first thing I want to say about this book is once again, the best part of my experience was that I went in blind. I read this book in February of this year. So I've been holding it all this time because I really hate it when we talk about books way in advance of them come I try to do it as close

**Kaytee Cobb** 34:11

as you can grab it in six months. Yeah,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 34:13

that irritates the pee waddle out of me. So I read this long time ago. But I have thought about it a lot since then. And I actually think it might be contributing to my wanting to read lighter books because the whole situation my fear for this book, because by the time the book actually comes out and is released widely and it lands in readers hands, we're going to start getting big pieces of information about it that I think are going to affect people's experience with the book and that's what I hope doesn't happen. So know that there's a whole lot about this book I can't discuss but also, there's a whole lot that I look forward to talking to readers about once they have read it. This book is a great book club book. It's propulsive from the start, it's got that wicked premise from the very first page, it grabbed me by the throat and I read it kind of like you did with Amina. I read it in one big inhalation. The premise is different from anything I've read before, and certainly anything I've read before by Kiersten White, who is very prolific and has put out all kinds of books, including a middle grade series that I absolutely love, which could not be any more different from Mister Magic if it tried. She contains multitudes in her multitudes for the entire time I was reading Mister Magic, I was filled with questions like what the heck is happening, but in the best possible way, it wasn't confusing or convoluted, it was just fascinating. And I found myself drawn to knowing more and more. And I will say that my overall feeling about this book when I was done was that it is unsettling. That is definitely by design by the author. She wants our characters, she wants us to feel unsettled by what they are finding out and what they are remembering about their childhood, that feeling is doubled down on by so many different elements in the story. The desert setting that we end up with is really really evocative. And I found myself wanting to sprint metaphorically out of there, again, by design, and I have complicated feelings about the ending. There are a lot of things that I really liked about it, and I think it was really well done. But there are a lot of things I would like to discuss with someone who's read it. Overall, this novel is really, really complicated from a theme perspective, and that is a positive for me in my reading. But I think I would be remiss if I didn't say that I feel sure this book is going to be divisive. Any book that tackles complicated topics is

Kiersten White remains an auto buy author for me, she contains those multitudes and every one of those is one I'm interested in reading more from this is Mister Magic by Kiersten White.

**Kaytee Cobb 36:57**

Remember you talking about this when you were currently reading it on All Things Murderful in February? And I was like, Wait, didn't she bring this to the show? Because I can you hear your voice typing about this book. So I'm glad we finally got the full treatment for it.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:11**

Yep, no, I've been saving it. I've been saving it. But that book has a whole situation and it's got a great cover. It's got a gorgeous,

**Kaytee Cobb 37:17**

like, Yeah, super memorable cover. Yeah. Excellent. I love it. Okay,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:23**

so we are now going to do a little mini deep dive Kaytee. We start every season with an episode Deep Dive that is what did you do on your summer vacation? So as we said at the top of the show this year, because of scheduling things, we ended up getting about five weeks off from the big show, we did some Patreon recording, you know, during that, but for the most part, we were off and we were proceeding to our lives in a different way. So how did you spend your time? And how did that affect your reading Kaytee?

**Kaytee Cobb 37:52**

Well, more than any previous summer break from the podcast, my summer was busted, my rhythm was busted. We packed up our house about two days after you and I recorded the final episode of season five. And so in the intervening five weeks, we have driven multiple times back and forth from Santa Fe to Phoenix. And we have been in the pool so much. We've spent so much time with family and friends that we are joyous to reconnect with. We're already working on building community here, which was a huge lack that we had in Santa Fe, we had a field trip today with a group of homeschool moms and their kids 60 people all at this amazing restaurant that was part of my childhood. So it's like nostalgia, connection, friendship. In the meantime, I've read less than half of what I normally do. And over summer break especially I usually see that number skyrocket because we were spending so much of our time alone in our houses, and our house for for summer breaks. So often because there was such a lack of homeschool community in Santa Fe. And so I would end you know, June and July in other years with 30 books, sometimes on my monthly tally. And this July, we're just about done with July as we record today. I think I've read 12 books, which is fine. That's a perfectly lovely number of books. And it's because my life has been so full in busyness and in joy. Otherwise, that it's really changed my daily rhythms and I I know it'll change again when we actually get into our own house. But it's definitely something that I'm like there's a little like simmer of anxiety like Kaytee, what if you're broken? What if you don't read anymore? Right.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:37**

And I think we both know that that's not going to happen. But we have talked you know offline about the fact that this may very well change some of the things about the volume of your reading, is it going to mean that you don't read anymore? I think absolutely not. But it's going to change some of the things about the volume of your reading and you I have a feeling you like I have been able to to since I moved to Austin, which has been such a value add for my reading, I think you're gonna get into some readerly community, in person that just adds so much to your life into your reading life. And so, yes, I think it's entirely possible, but I think it will be net net a really, really good thing.

**Kaytee Cobb** 40:18

That's what I'm hoping for definitely, what was your summer break like?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 40:21

Well, I certainly didn't have to worry about a move, which, you know, which meant that that element was off the table. For me, we the timing ended up being great, because at my day job, and here comes the guide, where I'm the CEO of Here Comes the Guide, we spend the month of July doing our annual review meetings with every employee, so my CEO, and I get together on video with all 42 of our employees. And so it's wonderful. It's wonderful. And my little introverted heart by the end of every day is just I, you know, introverts you know how this is, I mean, it's these meetings on top of my normal. So it's like nine to 11 hours of straight being on. And so again, it's been absolutely wonderful, we're so glad we it's so good for the business, it's so good for the culture, I love it. But it has meant that I've been kind of stumbling into my evenings, without a lot of bandwidth for doing much in the way of reading at all. Now I have been I have been reading. And I did allow myself to read some big chunks. As I read September, I'm gonna bring a couple of other books that I read. So I kind of, I had a good number of books saved up. So I let myself say, You know what, I'm being pulled to some of these bigger books. I'm gonna let myself read that because so often I'm like, oh, no, I just need a quick win. And so I let myself read some bigger books, that was really, really nice every single Friday, which is the day that I at Here Comes the Guide we work Monday through Thursday. So Fridays are devoted to Currently Reading for me, every single Friday of my break, I had breakfast or lunch with a friend in person, which is really great for me. And I'm so grateful to have really made a lot of community here in Austin. And so I have great friends that I want to spend time with. That's been really, really nice. I've been tried to be really intentional about that. And just generally, you know, I've tried to be intentional when Jackson says, Hey, do you want to come out and swim with me? Where I normally would be saying something like, oh, you know, I'm actually going into a recording or I met, you know, I just have been like, you know what, yeah, because I can, let's do it. And so I've just tried to be more present with my family. No, what I will say is that I have enjoyed all of that. And I also have been really looking forward to getting back into our normal recording rhythm. So I was really cognizant of the fact that I've been looking forward to talking books again regularly. So that feels really good going into six years of doing anything, you have to ask yourself, does it still light me up? And it still does. So I'm really grateful for that. So our summer break is really useful. I'm grateful that you every year Kaytee find a way to schedule us in a way that we can take all of this time off, but the listeners don't have five weeks of downtime, which we wouldn't do. But you know, I think it's a really useful way for us to recharge our batteries.

**Kaytee Cobb** 43:20

Definitely. And every year, I feel like oh my gosh, that's so long, like what am I going to do? How am I gonna feel fill my days, and then by the end, I feel so refreshed, I'm energized. I'm excited to talk about books. Again, I feel like I have different words, maybe even that I've learned over the summer that I can't wait to talk about within a current read or a setup or a deep dive, or ideas about reading that we haven't tackled as a deep dive before that I'm excited to bring as an option, like all kinds of stuff with regard to the creative side of currently reading has timed to flourish a little more, when we take that time away. And we're not sitting at the mic every single week. So I do have one other follow up for you. At the end of season five, we did our group show with Roxanna and Mary, and you and I, and Roxanna did she like stood at the pulpit and told everyone that the Kindle Oasis is literally the only option. And then it aired and people were like, Why didn't we hear this before Prime Day, folks, you failed? Yeah, that was terrible. So I will report that right after that episode. I did trade in an old Kindle. I got myself a new Kindle Oasis. And I am loving it. I'm like a data nerd. I am keeping track of if I read more on Kindle in the second half of the year than I did in the first half of the year, so I don't have those numbers yet, but I'm excited to see how that goes. I love the reading experience. I love how it adjusts. Like I did go with a different case. Then Meredith beloved case, because I like I what I love so much about it is that you can turn it either direction to read and have the buttons on either side. And the casebot Fintie Origami case lets you set it upside down or right side up. So I can eat with my right hand. And I can turn buttons with my left hand, and it's up in easel mode. So it's like sitting up on the table in front of me. It's so special. So I actually brought it so that I could show you what I'm talking about. Because I know that you're sitting there thinking what? So this is it sitting normal mode, right? Yeah. And then a Kindle can flip upside down. And it has an easel that flips both ways because of the way that it folds in the back.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 45:37

Okay. Yeah, no, that's, that's great. But I'm just the reason I have this look of confuzzled on my face is that I feel like I read an eat all the time. And I guess maybe use

**Kaytee Cobb** 45:47

your right hand to click though. Yeah. So you're just putting down your fork or you're like holding your fork while you click. I've got my finger on the button the whole time. And I'm using my fork with my right hand.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 45:57

Oh, I mean, I think I think I'm a big Pinky. Pusher. Yeah, I think I'm a pinky pusher I did I keep my pinky very, very clean. To push my Kindle

**Kaytee Cobb** 46:11

was going in a weird direction. This is this

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 46:13

is more than anyone wanted to know about us reading Kindles, but I'm glad that you're enjoying it. And I so much. I thought the fact that Roxanna was willing to get up there and just basically say, I don't want to hear anyone ever asked this question.

**Kaytee Cobb 46:27**

Yet. She like evangelized All of us.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:29**

She did. She did I love it so much. Well, you know, I agree. I love my Oasis. And I definitely have in fact, I was just looking at my stats, as I made sure that my first half of the year, data was entered into my spreadsheet, and I'm at four, I think 40% can go which is the highest number I've ever had. I'm not really reading so, so much on my Kindle. So great. It's that dark mode. It's the dark mode. I'm telling you that up huge difference that up did even further. I absolutely love it. Okay, all right. So rest makes a difference, take rest, there is nothing bad about taking a rest, it will make you sharper, and better in the work that you do later. So that's the take home that we have from our summer break. All right. So do you have a wish for the fountain?

**Kaytee Cobb 47:18**

Yes, I could switch it right now. And just say that I wish to encourage all of us to take rest when we need it and lean into that. But I'm going to keep my previous one which is I wish to encourage all of us to be secure in our book opinions. And this of course harkens back to when I was talking about the wishing game, you will sometimes hate a book that it seems like everyone loves you are never the only one. We get a whole lot of posts and questions in the bookish friends group. Am I the only one who thought this was and then insert a crappy adjective right? boring, repetitive, ridiculous, dumb, whatever it is. And the answer is never, ever, ever, ever. We've never seen it happen where everybody says nope, that was just you. You're the only one who thought that there's always solidarity. It can be really uncomfortable to have a contrary opinion, whether it's positive or negative. But you read the book and your experience of it matters. So my wish my little pink splash into the fountain is that our readers and our listeners will speak their truth. You are not the only one. You can have a spicy opinion, you can have a contrary opinion. And it is valid and we want to hear it. Yes.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:28**

I totally agree with you. I personally feel that if someone is going to post publicly that they didn't like a book that they do a lot of other people loved. I think you should absolutely do that. I think it needs to be done in a way that takes into account that other people loved it because I don't like it when anyone yucks anyone's yums and also I think it is most useful when someone doesn't just say spicy opinion I hated fill in the blank book. Pepper emoji pepper emoji. Am I the only one? I don't find that to be useful. But if you go on as you do, Kaytee when you talk about books that you that you don't like and talk about why it didn't work for you, while also leaving space for the fact that it worked for a lot of other people and here's why that you could see what that I think is the best possible scenario because absolutely we need to be authentic with our own how we felt about a book. Yes, but I just feel when it's a contrary opinion there needs to be some care taken because if we don't do that, all it does is shut down discussion. It doesn't open up discussion. Do you see what I'm saying?

**Kaytee Cobb 49:40**

Oh, yeah, definitely, you know,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:42**

so but uh wholeheartedly cosign on your wish for sure. I wish that ever I have actually bought a product Kaytee and I think you're hopefully get hopefully you're gonna cosign on this product cuz I bought it for you for your birthday.

**Kaytee Cobb** 49:54

Oh, yes, I will.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 49:56

Okay, good. Good. So I am want you to consider jazzing up your summer reading area now we've spent a lot of time talking about our cozy winter reading area right our our cozy chair our lamp and side table, our warm fuzzy blanket. But in the summer, you need something a little bit different and I have found the perfect companion, which is a company called Own Koti. O W N K O T I They make these cotton blankets and throws that are the perfect weight for summer reading. I have one I have a full size one on our bed. They make these amazing prints. They have lots of neutrals, but they have some amazing prints if you lean that way or you want something really colorful, most of them are reversible. So you're getting two amazing prints. They are the exact right wait for reading under the air conditioner. Yes, right without being too heavy or fuzzy which I just don't like that in the summertime and then they have throws that are the exact right size and shape for just your chair. I love this we'll include a link in our show notes. Not an affiliate, not a sponsor not in anything. This is just something that I get so many compliments on when people come over on these blankets. They are just so perfect for summer reading. So I wish that everyone would at least take a look at them and consider that you take a couple of weeks to arrive and I always throw them into the wash when they arrive because when they get there they have a little bit of a I've been traveling on a boat kind of smell. So wash them in your favorite whatever recipe in your laundry and then get it on your summer reading area.

**Kaytee Cobb** 51:35

It's so perfect the weight and the weave of it. I guess it's like a muslin it reminds me of how I used to swaddle my babies even in summertime and I knew that the lightest weight blanket with like some good stretch to it. Yeah, that kind of feel to it. It makes me feel swaddled.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 51:52

Yeah, yeah, it's got it has that muslin feel. But it has it has more weight than just than just plain muslin. Yeah,

**Kaytee Cobb** 51:59

it's like a single sheet of muslin. Right.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 52:01

It's yeah, I've just I've been so surprised. And I just every single day I'm like, I love this blanket. It's perfect. All right, that is it for this week. As a reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me on Meredith at @MeredithMondaySchwartz on Instagram.

**Kaytee Cobb** 52:17



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

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 52:21

full show notes with the title of every book we mentioned in the episode and timestamps. So you can zoom right to where we talked about it can be found on our website at [currentlyreadingpodcast.com](http://currentlyreadingpodcast.com).

**Kaytee Cobb** 52:30

You can also follow the show at @currentlyreadingpodcast on Instagram or threads, that's a new thing, or email us at [currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com](mailto:currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com).

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 52:39

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**Kaytee Cobb** 53:01

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

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 53:06

Alright, until next week, may your coffee be hot or iced

**Kaytee Cobb** 53:09

and your book be unputdownable.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 53:11

Happy reading Kaytee,

**Kaytee Cobb** 53:12

happy reading Meredith