



Season 6, Episode 13: Types of Bookmarks + Boss My TBR

Mon, Oct 30, 2023 • 56:05

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 late 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 with my reading, sometimes it's okay to be wrong.

Kaytee Cobb 00:41

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in Arizona. And I've gotten out all my skulls and candles to match the season and my reading mood. This is episode number 13 of season six. And we are so glad you're here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:54

Kaytee, it's perfect that it's episode number 13. And we're continuing to talk all things spooky and spooky decor and Halloween, we're in the mood for it.

Kaytee Cobb 01:04

We're totally in the mood. The day before Halloween is when this episode drops in real time. Of course, we're a little before that. But I was excited to get out my skulls and my spiders and my pop out of this picados and all the things for my Day of the Dead celebrations.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:18

That is so perfectly spooky. All right, well, we will let you know that later on in the episode for our deep dive we are going to be bossing to people's TBR. So that means they have given us a list of five books each that they're interested in reading. We're going to narrow this list to three and give them the order

we think that we should read them in. So that's coming up a little bit later. But first, Kaytee, let's start out with our bookish moments of the week. What have you got? Okay,

Kaytee Cobb 01:44

my bookish moment of week this week is very homeschool-y. This only happens every once awhile. But today, my kids participated in a history wax museum. So probably two months ago now they each chose a historical figure to research and created their very first poster board presentations. We don't get to do this live because their classroom is our home. Right? So trifold boards, I like I was living my best life way back in my own school days as well. We researched for different historical figures, we hit up goodwill to find the appropriate items for them to wear. And then we got together with 20 other homeschool kids at a local park. And they had to stand still next to their boards until someone pressed their button on their board, which we made out of like egg crate pieces or egg carton pieces. And that activated the little historical figures. So they would recite a short paragraph about that person and their life and then standstill until their button was pressed again. It was so fun. They did such a great job. And it was so great to see, you know, these kids were all ages like mine themselves. They're just five to 13 years old, but we had up to 16 17 18 year olds as well. And to see the range of abilities, the range of figures that they chose the people that they were interested in that they got to learn more about very self directed learning, but very interesting to see how they dove into the research part of it. And so for me, I got to read a bunch about four different historical figures because of course, I was doing my own research. I got to help them make poster boards with fun scissors and glitter glue and all kinds of other stuff. And we just really lived like our best bookish life as we got into these people that they were excited to learn about. Well, I've

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:25

seen pictures and their costumes were legit, and their poster boards were legit. So that sounds like a perfect project. We were supposed to do something like that in fourth grade. I believe that that was the year of COVID. So Jackson missed out on that.

Kaytee Cobb 03:41

Yeah, thankfully my kids were not actually made of wax because guess what in Arizona it was still very, very hot today. They all overheated.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:49

Awe. All right. Well, I alluded in my my bite size intro to the fact that sometimes it's okay to be wrong. And Kaytee, I have recently been proven very, very wrong about something. And I have big feelings about it. So you know, Kaytee and I have talked many times about the fact that I don't collect a lot of things because I don't like a lot of things around me. But I do collect bookmarks and I delight in my bookmark collection. I delight in buying them when I go places. When I went to London I bought several and my whole life I've delighted in choosing if I'm reading a print book, the right bookmark to go with it. When we were in London, we were in the Cotswolds in our little cottage Betsie and I got to spend quite a bit of time playing with our books together and talking and reading together. And one of the things that came up is that she consistently has found that a post-it is the perfect bookmark, which I took every opportunity to disagree with her about. Bookmarks are better for a variety of reasons. We have this ongoing discussion. Well then I got home and through a weird set of consensus, the only thing I had to

hand one day when I was getting ready to close my book was a book was a post-it. And not a very even pretty posted. Just an ugly green one

Kaytee Cobb 05:09

wrinkly one. No, no. Okay. Oh, still a fresh one guy who

Meredith Monday Schwartz 05:13

met me. Right. Okay. But like not especially bespoke in any way. And so I used it. And do you know that I have continued use it is a really good bookmark system. It really is it doesn't fall out, you don't lose it and have to look for it in your bed or in your seat or whatever, the cat doesn't try to eat it because it's falling out. And now it's on the floor. And also, it continued to show me because I just kept it on the page where I began reading. And I really liked being able to see how many pages I was reading at a go, which of course you can also use a bookmark for that. But it's a better system. And I'm very upset about it. unfair because now I'm now when I use my proper bookmarks, I know that I'm not using the best possible marking system. So it's a readerly problem. But anyway, so I would love to know, what do you guys think do pro or con the post it note as a bookmark? What do you think, Kaytee?

Kaytee Cobb 06:18

Well, I have to say that, because of the number of children I have, and the number of babies I had in a row, I don't love a bookmark. Because kids will take out a bookmark, it is like this little thing that's ready to pull out. So I typically use either a book Dart, which slides onto the edge of the page and doesn't move when you pick up your book or move it around or carry it around by the back cover if you're a two year old toddler or whatever. I also love a post-it that's part of where my instagram name came from notesonbookmarks, because I would stick a post-it into the book and make notes on it. So

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:53

Oh, I totally forgot about that.

Kaytee Cobb 06:55

I mean, I love you. I do love a post-it as a bookmark. So I kind of feel like that sees right? Yeah, well, I

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:02

mean, clearly I agree that it is it is the better system. And so I you know, I guess what I need to do is either just decide, I'm going to use a bookmark because it makes me happy, or I'm going to use post it because it's the right thing to do. And either way, it's okay.

Kaytee Cobb 07:17

You know what, though, I still keep bookmarks. Because I like the memory associated with them. I keep them in a mason jar on top of my bookshelf, and I can go through them. And if I'm going to take a photo of a book, for example, I will slide a pretty bookmark in there because it feels right.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:31

Right, maybe that's what I need to do is I need to take my bookmark collection and make it more visible to me. Because right now it's in a pouch, which I love the pouch that is in but it's in a pouch, which is in

a drawer, which is you know, so anyway, well, this is the kind of thing that only I can only talk about here because absolutely nobody else on the planet other than those of us listening cares about this issue of a bookmark versus opposed it. That's true. All right. Okay, so let's get into our current reads. Kaytee, what's your first current read?

Kaytee Cobb 08:01

All right, I have an older middle grade novel as my first current read. This week, I want to talk about NIMS island by Wendy Orr. So this is a short middle grade book that released in 1999. And I just read it for the first time this year as a read aloud to my kids so we were all experiencing it for the first time together. Here's the setup. Nim is basically a modern day Robinson Crusoe, she lives on a deserted tropical island with her dad Jack. He brought her there when she was just a baby after her mom was tragically lost in a research accident involving the mouth of a whale and a relentless tourist boat. Jack leaves her a young teen in this story alone for three days to make progress on his own research about plankton, but that's okay because Nim is brave and self sufficient and knowledgeable. And she's not really alone. She's got selfie the sea lion to mother her and an iguana named Fred for Comic Relief and her buddy Chica the sea turtle shows up to lay some eggs as well. She and Jack send each other letters by other reluctant messenger Galileo, the frigate bird who will only stop to deliver messages if you offer him a piece of fish. Every day she completes her chores on schedule, sets up the solar panels and satellite dish to check email and climbs trees to get bananas and coconuts to eat. Jack checks in every evening via satellite phone. But when her father's cell phone calls stopped coming and disaster seems near Nam is glad she's been hearing from a mysterious author via email, because she's going to have to solve problems that she's never encountered before. Okay, this book was not very long. Like I said, it was lovingly illustrated in the way that it reminded me of Quentin Blake's illustrations in Roald Dahl's books like that. The Twits, Matilda, The BFG that kind of pencil-y drawing and peppered with light hearted hilarity. The kids laughed out loud many times and I definitely chuckled here and there. The characters both human and animal are excellent. Even if you don't agree with most of their choices or actions throughout this book. Well, the kids are really enjoyed it and are attempting to find the major motion picture that it was turned into in 2008. With dubious reviews, I found a few major plot holes that really bothered me. There are storylines introduced, especially with regard to the email contact, whose name is Alex that are never followed through. And there are definitely situations that should have resulted in death, especially for a young girl. But that would be a different kind of middle grade novel. So overall, we did enjoy it. They enjoyed it a lot. I enjoyed it a little, but it was a fun read for us to read aloud and experience together. This was NIMS Island by Wendy Orr,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:36

well, any book that has your kids laughing out loud is at least good for us to have on a list somewhere because you're always looking for that, like, what's that read that? Even if it's a couple chapters a night? They're gonna love it. That's useful to know about? Yes,

Kaytee Cobb 10:49

and I love a read aloud that's not 400 pages long, because then you can click through them pretty quickly, even if you're only doing a chapter or two a day.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:56

Yeah, absolutely. All right. Well, I'm bringing another book from my travels to the UK. This one is a British courtroom drama called *The Trial*. It's by an author named Rob Rinder. Here's the setup. So we've got two plot lines that we're following in *The Trial*. First, Hero policeman, Grant Cliveden dies from a poisoning as he heads into the Old Bailey. This is a big deal. Cliveden is Uber Uber famous in the UK. And he's easily the most celebrated and vaunted policeman. The evidence and there's a lot of it points to one man, Jimmy Knight, who is he has a very checkered past with plenty of run ins with the law. And defending him is no easy task, not least because the barrister assigned to him is a trainee Adam Green, and this is his first case. Poor poor Adam Green, shunted unwillingly into the limelight. And it's a huge limelight for reasons that no one understands. But he rallies and is our own hero battling not only for justice, but also against the weight of public opinion, and the media frenzy. And all he wants to do is get his client a fair trial. Because it turns out that Jimmy Knight is by no means the only person who wants Grant Cliveden dead. Alright, as I said, I got this book. When I was in the UK, this was a shelf talker at Waterstones and I loved it. I double checked. It's also available here in the US too. So as I said, a British courtroom mystery. And I want more of this micro genre Steve Kavanaugh of *Thirteen* fame which of course, you know, is another great courtroom mystery blurb'd this book and he said that it was hugely enjoyable. And that's really what I walked away with. There wasn't anything groundbreaking here, but it just rolled right along. Our lead character student barrister Adam Green is a likable young guy working hard and trying his best and I loved being on the case with him. Anytime my main character is truly trying hard for justice. I'm in a happy place. Plus, we've got very accessible straightforward prose and short chapters. So an enjoyable reading experience. There were several bad baddies and some baddies who ended up being very morally complex characters. And that also is a place in my reading that I love. What I loved most was learning the ins and outs of the British legal system, especially the difference between the work of solicitors and barristers. And the secret behind those wigs that they were all of it is just different enough to keep my mind learning while also caring very much about the outcome of the two cases that we're following. And the courtroom scenes taking place in the history infused Old Bailey were fascinating. I never read faster than when I'm following a juicy court scene. Did I see the ending coming, Kaytee? Yes. And I bet you will too. But that was okay. What was interesting was the way it played out and the way several plot points were woven together. Well, I wouldn't compare this read to reading *Thirteen* by steamed Cavanaugh, which is a lot more violent and dark. I think this book is a perfect recommendation for those of us who loved *The Thursday Murder Club* series. Like that series. This book has a cracking mystery to solve but no Gore or violence to contend with on the page. It's gentle courtroom mystery. The two books are not exactly the same. But I think the books would have a lot of happy shared readers, and I certainly am one of them. This is *The Trial* by Rob Rinder.

Kaytee Cobb 12:33

I definitely remember driving by the Supreme Court in London on one of our bus tour days. So that's kind of a fun connection there. Yes, yes. All right. You said that one is not violent and dark. The next one I have is that it is *The Poppy War* but by R.F. Kuang. So this is the debut novel of RF Kuang, who recently ish a year and a half ago captured my reader heart completely with *Babel*. I've now gone both forward and back in her catalog and get to tell you about this new one, which is her old one. *The Poppy War* is based on a fictional 20th century China, where we meet Ren, Ren is an orphan who was supposed to get married off so that her guardians could finally gain something useful from her. But

instead, she aced the Ki Joo, which is a test that the youth of the Empire can take in order to determine if they are talented enough to learn at the Academies and that's with a capital A. She is accepted into Sign Guard Academy, the most elite military training school in econ, which is surprising to say the least. But surprises are not always good, because she's a dark skinned peasant girl from the south, which puts a target on her back. Her rival classmates hate her for her color, poverty and gender, but Ren discover she possesses the art of shamanism. She is connected with a mentally unstable teacher, and he gives her psychoactive substances in order to teach her to master control over her powers. It's going a little weird, right? As Ren learns, the country also starts to experience a period of unrest and upheaval. And it turns out that the third Poppy war might be on the horizon. The first two were devastating to the population of the country, so she's hoping that they can avert it. But it may be that her powers are the only way to save her people. This novel is billed as an epic military fantasy, and it hits on all those levels. First, it's epic, because it's the first in a trilogy and clocks in at over 500 pages, depending on the version you read. It's not a short book by any means. It's also military fantasy, which I did know going into the novel, but it still surprised me how violent it is. Maybe that's my naivety because I don't know if I've ever read something before that can get shelved in that part of the bookstore. But my goodness, this was really difficult to read. There's sexual and interpersonal violence that's like on a deep level, Ren may be younger when we meet her, but this is not a YA novel with YA themes. It gets unforgettably violent, but it can military fantasy. So I guess that's on me. Finally, this is often an issue for me with these epic series, but it felt like there was entirely too much going on here. Like the layers were excessive for this reader. And it may have been my reading life at the time. As I read it this summer when I was a bit screwy in my rhythms. As you all heard about on the podcast, I probably didn't have the actual mental bandwidth for a 500 page epic military fantasy, which is not to say that I didn't love the characters, especially Alton and Chitti were an excellent balance for each other and counterpoints to our main character. When the Sign Guard Academy felt like a real place that I got to walk through in my mind, as I was reading, it was when we left the school to attempt to avert war outside that it all felt to be a little too much for me. That doesn't change the fact that I gave it four stars because of those school based sections. And the Goodreads average is 4.17 stars. So if this book sounds like it's the right fit for you, it's going to be really, really right for you people love this novel and this trilogy. Well, I'm looking forward to more from Kuang I probably won't be finishing this series, and that's okay. Because I did enjoy my little dip into it. It was The Poppy War by RF Kuang. Now, can you refresh my memory? You still haven't read Fourth Wing, right? I have not. Did I also buy a second edition of the Second Volume Special Edition this week? I did. What is wrong with me?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 18:37

I did too. I was so disappointed myself.

Kaytee Cobb 18:39

What is happening? I haven't even read the first one. Meredith I have the

Meredith Monday Schwartz 18:43

sprayed edge dragon one and a plane one. And did I need a third one? Well anyway, but the point I'm making is I really right now wish that you had read it because there is a lot about that plot that you just described that made me think is Fourth Wing, a very simplified version of this but like there was there was a lot might be ideal. You know what I mean? That's what I'm saying. It's like I've never thought that

fourth wing might be a better fit for you than I do now. Because I feel like there are some similarities there.

Kaytee Cobb 19:12

Maybe it's finally time Honestly, I was waiting till we got closer till November because I was worried about having that long stretch. And now by the time this releases we're two days away from November so I mean, we're basically they're basically there it's time

Meredith Monday Schwartz 19:24

Kaytee it's time I feel a time I think it might be time. All right, my next book is also a left turn from from my first one. This one is called Burn the Negative by Josh Winning. Here's our setup. Our story starts with a journalist named Laura Warren and she's arriving in LA to write an article about a series that's being filmed for like a Netflix type of situation. Okay, in this series, is a remake of a 90s horror movie. Okay, so bear with me. So she's she's been assigned to go to LA to report on the series. That's remake. Now, that 90s horror movie is considered to be a cursed horror movie that starred a campy villain called the needle man. That film was called cursed. And it became famous not because it was a great movie, but because so many people associated with it were murdered in almost exactly the same way that their character was murdered in the movie. Well, this journalist Laura Warren, back in the day, she was an eight year old child actress, and she starred in this movie, but when all this gruesome stuff started happening with her co stars, she and her parents moved across the Atlantic, they changed her name, she changed her accent basically wanting to completely forget about that part of her life. But now, as the body count on this new series begins to rise, Laura finds herself on the run and trying to finally solve the mystery of the needle man, once and for all. Okay, I heard about this book from my book boyfriend Bill and An Unlikely Story. And as soon as I heard the premise, I knew I needed to grab it. It's such catnip for me, like Mr. Magic by Kiersten White. I love stories of old or classic shows or movies, and going behind the scenes, especially when something went really wrong that we don't know about. And this book is definitely thriller, reading fun. It's mixed media. You guys know, that's a thing for me. And you know, I love it. This book keeps you guessing all the way through trying to figure out who could possibly be responsible for the horrible things that are happening, or is it something truly supernatural? It absolutely keeps you guessing until the very, very end, and I loved it. I had so much fun thinking through each one of the characters and what I knew about them, and what their possible motives might be. And I found the ending incredibly satisfying. This book has puzzle solving fun, campy horror, gory movie deaths, and an interesting look behind the scenes at child stardom. If you liked poltergeist and the story's about that movie and the curse that was supposedly on it, then you will find a lot to like here. I want to say this is definitely horror, but it's not anything as bad as what I've read in, say, Paul Tremblay or Stephen King. Speaking of that Paul Tremblay himself blurbed this book, calling it creepy, twisty and compulsively readable. And I would say that is exactly the way to describe it. This is Burn the Negative by Josh winning the sounds so good. It was good. It's violent.

Kaytee Cobb 22:39

I want it. Yeah, I want it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 22:41

I would recommend the print.

Kaytee Cobb 22:43

I love the title. I love the cover. I love mixed media like you do and I want it right now.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 22:48

There's so much mixed media go and I've read so much mixed media. I'm really trying to slow my roll on how much of that I bring to the show. Feel like I might be edging toward the end of my like my obsessive fascination with it. But there's a lot of really good books coming out.

Kaytee Cobb 23:06

Okay, the only thing you said in the setup that I was like, Wait, what is a horror series? And I guess, maybe it's just because I haven't watched any. But I mean, I guess I've watched Stranger Things. It just sounds weird to me. Like I can sit through a horror movie for two hours straight and just like let my adrenaline ramp way up and then crash down. I love that feeling. But to do it over and over again every week or every episode. That sounds exhausting. Well,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 23:31

I mean, I'm assuming you haven't watched Midnight Mass on Netflix.

Kaytee Cobb 23:35

I have watched Midnight Mass and you're right. It terrified the crap out of me. Right. Hmm.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 23:39

And then the new Fall of the House of Usher. Which I'm starting this weekend. Yeah. So yes. A horror series like like the remake that they're making in this book are is really very interesting to me. It's very, I mean, basically, it's a way to modernize this camping 90s movie that came out.

Kaytee Cobb 23:56

Yeah. Okay. All right. Well, I'm in I want it, I'm gonna get it ASAP. Okay, my third one, we're just going to leave all that scary merryiness that we left behind because now I'm going to talk about something very different. If that last read for me was a bit dark and complicated and Meredith's have been dark and complicated. I have the perfect counterpoint to that. This next read is a graphic novel that's delicious and delightful and can be read in an hour or less. It's The Princess and the Grilled Cheese sandwich by Deya Muniz. Here's the setup. It is so cheesy, Meredith and like I mean, literally this time. Here's the setup. Lady Camembert has a loving father and a beautiful home. But he's aging and unwell. And the law of the land says A woman cannot inherit property or wealth except if she's married to a man obviously. So they hatch a plot together on his deathbed to help her circumvent that law. When her father passes away, Camembert leaves the city disguised as a man and moves to the capital city of the kingdom of Fromage to start over. As Count Camembert. For a few pages, she wallows in loneliness at home, and just wishing she could get out of the house and enjoy the sights of the city, but when she receives an invitation to a ball, even her devoted housekeeper Fetta cannot keep her from attending. Still dressed as a man of course and with stick on sideburns to keep the illusion in place. At the ball she meets the beautiful princess Brie who is a fierce fighter for justice especially for her pet causes like her anti fast fashion anti-fur mission as the to get to know each other and share many meals with their

friends Countess Gorgonzola I can't I love it so much. including of course grilled cheese sandwiches as their main event for all their meals. They love a great grilled cheese is so cheesy. We every name if you have not picked up every single name I've said so far is the type of cheese I can't

Meredith Monday Schwartz 26:03

remember cuz you said graphic novel and I went into a few states but hang on. Are these characters cheese or are they

Kaytee Cobb 26:10

humans? They're humans. They just all have cheese names. Okay. Can't remember. Kingdom of Fromage Princess Brie, Lady Gorgonzola. They're all they're all They're all your favorite cheeses are here. They're just human beings. It's great.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 26:25

I like the name Feta. Why haven't we Why aren't more people named Feta that's kind of a pretty name. You can give it like a pH and two t's. And you've got a really lovely name

Kaytee Cobb 26:34

we in our house we always say molfetta mo betta so

Meredith Monday Schwartz 26:37

there you go. I think little baby Phetta Schwarz would have been really?

Kaytee Cobb 26:43

Oh, that would have been really cute. I like that. Okay, so this book is a romantic comedy with royal shenanigans and mistaken identity all rolled into one and melted together like a gooey quesadilla. The acknowledgments of this book mentioned that our author Deya modeled the story on her own love story with her wife, all the drawings included in the acknowledgments, bring their love story to life and show how it connects with the graphic novel as well. This came onto my radar from our friend Jaysen Headley at eezekat but was actively pressed into my hands by my reading buddies, Katie and Candace, they assured me it would be the perfect slump Buster read. And they were right. I read it in a single hour curled up on the couch, and it was cheesy and delicious. I borrowed it from the library because I knew it would be a quick read. And sometimes it's hard to splurge on a graphic novel for that reason. There's lots of ink, pretty pages, glossy pages, and a hardcover equals an expensive book that you can read in an hour. So even for my kids, I'm like can we not like that those are expensive, and the you're done with them so fast. However, this one brought me so much joy. It's almost like the break in case of emergency novella that you mentioned last week, Meredith, A Psalm for the Wild Built. When it comes out in paperback. I will be grabbing a copy to keep on my shelves as a mood boost in case of emergency to be deployed as needed. It's The Princess and the Grilled Cheese Sandwich by Deya Muniz.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:06

Well, you know, Kaytee, sometimes we just need a little short something to cleanse our palate. A little, a little cheese course. Before we move on to the rest

Kaytee Cobb 28:16
of mush. Yeah, I like it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:18
Excellent. Okay. All right. Again, we're this is an interesting platter of books that we're we're offering charcuterie,

Kaytee Cobb 28:27
we've got the saltiness we got the sweets who got everything

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:30
right because I did not think that I was going to be going from The Princess and the Grilled Cheese to I think my number one book of the entire year. In one show.

Kaytee Cobb 28:40
I already know this right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:41
You know this, okay,

Kaytee Cobb 28:42
thank goodness because I was like, Wait a minute.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:44
Anybody who listened to October's indie press list has heard me talk about it because you but it's obviously going to be I really think it's going to be my number one book of the year. So I have to talk about it on the big show. And I can't wait it is Starling House by Alix E Harrow. Here's the setup. We have our lead character Opal. And Opal has my heart Opal has not had an easy run of things to say the least she lost her parents. She's a high school dropout. But now, no matter how hard life gets, Opal is determined to make the way in life for her younger brother Jasper. And that life she is sure must be outside of their hometown of Eden, Kentucky now the town of Eden Kentucky is a character itself in this novel. It's dirty, dingy and down on its luck, just like Opal is but it's famous for one thing, ie Starling the reclusive 19th century author of the Underland, which is a novel of children's literature, which became a cult classic, and E Starling herself disappeared over 100 years ago, but what she left behind is her home, Starling house Starling houses spooky creepy falling down and no one knows much about this mansion except for the fact that every few decades a new air shows up and takes up residence, but then isn't seen again. Opal has been obsessed with the underlined the book and the starling house since she was a child. And as our story starts, she gets the chance to step inside Starling house, but sinister things are happening and Opal may have more to do with the starling destiny than she realizes.

Kaytee Cobb 30:29
That was a great setup. Meredith i Oh, that was fantastic. You.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 30:32

Thank you. I worked really hard on that setup, because everywhere else I felt like it wasn't really thank you for saying that, Kaytee. All right. This book is perfectly made for spooky season. And by that I mean not just October, absolutely into November. This book is perfection. It was a an indie press list pick from Novel Neighbor for October, and they always hit it out of the park. They did oh my gosh, massively with this year's October list. Alex Harrow is absolutely amazing. I love her. This book grabs you at the very beginning, like the first page, the first line on the first page, and takes you along, for an amazing ride the entire way through the language is what I'm always so amazed about Harrow's writing, she somehow manages to be incredibly accessible and propulsive and yet she has this beautiful language that has you scrambling for my pin and my book darts just randomly in the middle of a paragraph. And here she creates the lead character of Opal who is so fully realized from the very start, you feel that you know this girl and more than anything, although she's a very Kentucky hardscrabble character you love her. I laughed out loud, so many times in the portions of this book that were written from her point of view, Starling House has all of that beautiful language. And it has an amazing house that would top tip-top my list of any list of houses that are characters in a book, Starling House is amazing, like the actual house. It's magical. It's scary, it's beautiful. It's terrifying. It's comforting. It's a house of necessity, meaning it gives you what you need, if you should be there. And it's a house that you run from if you shouldn't, it's all the things and the key to this book is finding out how and why that is true. The setting is amazing. As I mentioned, even Kentucky is a fully realized character of its own. The story is propulsive all the way through, and the footnotes, the footnotes, whether you read this on Kindle, or in print, you must read them. I loved the way she used the footnotes. To add color and texture to the story. This book also has levels of spooky macabre and morbid that were just a delight for someone who is a reader like I am. There were a couple of lines that were so macabre that it had me doing my best witch cackle and writing them down for Johnny so that he knows what to put on my tombstone. I was so happy. This will be as I said, I think my number one book of the year this is Starling House by Alix E Harrow. Interesting to note. My number one book of last year was Ten Thousand Doors of January, also by Alix E Harrow,

Kaytee Cobb 33:25

that worked out pretty well. I think I messaged you, or at least I messaged you about the physical book itself because I just finished this either last night or the night before. Yeah, which was hard for me because I was reading it on Kindle before the indie press list episode came out. But the hardcopy did not release until October 3. And we were both in Europe. Like we had to wait out of the country, we were out of the country. So I decided I wanted the physical reading experience to finish out my read of this novel, which means I waited and I waited, I waited to get home and get my books from Novel Neighbor assigned copy. Thank you so much, Steve and Holland for making that happen. And I finished it and like close to the back cover and side a happy side. And my entire review was this was legit. Perfect. Yep. I loved this book completely. I totally agree with everything you've said. It's fantastic. It's

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:19

so so good. It's got I think it also surprised me because it had well, like Ten Thousand Doors of January. I'm not gonna say there's a romance in it. There's a love story in both of those books that completely surprised me. But it was just so welcome and wonderful and nuanced. And this book is it's all the things

and it came out at the perfect time. Kudos to the publisher for getting it right on this book as far as when it needed to come out.

Kaytee Cobb 34:48

Definitely. Oh my gosh, yes, it's so perfectly October to release it. October 3 is like a chef's kiss of perfect publishing nuance. Yeah.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 35:00

It's got a gorgeous, gorgeous cover. And yeah, it's really, really good. And if you're really bothered by the Reese's book club sticker, which is on the majority of the copies, Barnes and Noble does have its own edition, which I think says Barnes and Noble Special Edition. So pick your poison.

Kaytee Cobb 35:17

Fair. We do have a bookish friend who bought a small Starling sticker. Or she put it over the Reese's book club mark, or read with Jenna, is it Reese? I don't even know when you cover I think it is a signed copy. Yes. So I can't see whose book club it is. But she put it directly over it so that it kind of seamlessly blends in with the other starlings on the cover. And I thought that was pretty brilliant.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 35:39

I mean, that's a cottage industry right there. As far as I'm concerned, like, makers start making stickers for big, huge books that perfectly cover over what up because this is the thing everyone talks about. I'll bet you you could make bank on that.

Kaytee Cobb 35:54

Yes, whoever's listening. We want just this tiny tiny cut. Yes,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 35:58

yeah. Well, I mean, I just want someone to be successful with their Etsy store. Just send me stickers. Yes, free stickers. There you go. All right. So those are our current reads. Like we said, it is a cornucopia of books for today. So happy that we got a chance to talk about all of those something for everyone. And so now we are going to talk about something for two specific people. But it might also help other people who are listening, we are going to do our repeat segment, boss, my TBR. So every few months, we do this and every few more months, we put a post on our bookish Friends Group, which of course, if you want to be involved in that, you can become a patron subscriber, it's only \$5 a month, you get a ton of additional content, and you can join the bookish friends group. And so then you'll see our post that says, Hey, do you want us to boss your TBR here's where you give us your five books that are kind of top of your list, and we will help you choose the best three, and we'll put them in order.

Kaytee Cobb 36:57

You know what was fun about it this time is the first time nobody knew what we were going to do with those five books. And this time, we had a lot of bookish friends chiming back in to say, oh my gosh, I love your five picks. If I were gonna get to choose, I would choose these so that people are already getting feedback, even if they're not the two that we chose for today. Well,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:14

exactly. Not only are they getting feedback, people are finding bookish twins because when you put up Hey, these are five books that I've got coming up on my TBR we get a taste of your taste.

Kaytee Cobb 37:23

Yes. And who might be a good buddy reader because maybe somebody else has three of those five coming up on their own TBR I love

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:29

it. I love it so much. That's worth the \$5 month. Alright, commercial ended. Let's talk about the two victims that we've got for this month. Katie, you chose them. Thank you for doing that.

Kaytee Cobb 37:39

Yes, our first person this month is named Natasha Jack and I chose her for nostalgia sake. Here's what her comment says. Pick me choose me. Love me. I love it. I love it so much. So that is an old school Grey's Anatomy reference for anybody who does not know, which was my like religion for seven years. I watched the crap out of this show.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:02

And she's got a little hand raised emoji too, which is so yes.

Kaytee Cobb 38:05

So here are her five books. First one Demon Copperhead by Barbara Kingsolver. Second one, This is How it Always is by Laurie Frankel. Third one, A Darker Shade of Magic by VE Schwab. Fourth, A Murder in the Family by Cara Hunter. And fifth, The Adventures of Amina Al-Sirafi by Shannon Chakraborty. This is a great stack.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:26

Yeah, I mean, both the ones that you chose have really given me like my lanta moments, because it's really hard to choose. Because this is a very quality stack of books. Every one of these is well written. Every one of these is a great example of its genre. And we have a lot of different genres represented here. We've got some literary fiction, we've got some mystery. We've got some fantasy, we've got some contemporary fiction and then some pirate fiction.

Kaytee Cobb 38:55

Yes. Which is its own genre, which we all love. So I was like, Oh, I mean, just read them all. I don't know what to tell you.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:02

I know anybody read all of these books because you will be you will be richly rewarded.

Kaytee Cobb 39:07

Yes, definitely. So I guess I'm gonna go first, I'm gonna tell you my top three. You can tell me how I was wrong. Because really, all of them are fantastic. So I kind of tried to group these as two family dramas and one has my heart forever and ever. So I'm going with This is How it Always Is over Demon Copperhead. And I realized they are not really in the same genre. Y'all don't come at me. I know. They're not in the same genre. I'm calling them both family drama, so I could eliminate one. That's the only reason that I didn't like this, right. We've got to narrow things down somewhere. Next, I wanted to give her a thriller for a change of pace from that like, drama and sweetness and maybe crying. So that means we're doing Murder in the Family next. And finally, while I loved Adventures of Amina Al-Sirafi, it's a series that is not complete yet and will involve waiting for many months for the next book, and the next and the next. So I'm going to pick A Darker Shade of Magic by VE Schwab for the third spot because of she loves it. The series is complete, and she can keep going with that storyline. So that's what I went with.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 40:08

Okay. I think I mean, I think you make a really, really good argument. I mean, for me, I haven't. I've been saving Demon Copperhead, and I'm, I'm like, I just can't wait to read it. But this is one that I did the same thing you did with Fourth Wing, like everyone was talking about it. I needed to put some space in. So I'm very much looking forward to it. But man, so many people have said it's their favorite book of the year. I felt like we have to start with that. And then I went to Murder in the Family by Cara Hunter, and then finish it off with A Darker Shade of Magic for that exact reason, change of pace. And also, it's a full series. So if she really, really loves it, she can go to the rest of these books on this list and then do the second one in that series. So I think she just can't go wrong with this list of books.

Kaytee Cobb 40:53

Yeah, I completely agree. I think she's gonna get an emotional gut punch. I think she's gonna get some fast paced stuff. I think she's gonna get some great fantasy. I think it's a great list.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 41:01

It's a really good list. All right. But then, and I know you did this on purpose. I could hear your evil laugh as I read it, then that's the one. That's it.

Kaytee Cobb 41:13

Yeah. Well, I have a you.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 41:16

You did. You did this because you said, I'm gonna give Meredith a list of five books that she is simply not going to be able to choose from. She is not going to be able to cut any one of these out. Okay, this is this is Jennifer rose. This is her list. And Jennifer Rose, we are clearly bookish twins, my friend. If this is your your list of TBRs, she says someone's got to help me because I'm all over the place. And she says here's the list that I keep staring at but not touching. Okay, so here's her books, The Push by Ashley Adrain, Under the Whispering Door by TJ Klune, The Magpie Murders by Anthony Horowitz, Scythe by Neal Shusterman. And The Yoga Store Murder by Dan Morse. This is a very wicked list of

books for me, because there's not a single one that I think I would feel comfortable saying, Oh, just don't read that one. Just don't

Kaytee Cobb 42:17

read that one. Yeah.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 42:20

Okay, but because I'm a team player, I decided to just do what I needed to do

Kaytee Cobb 42:27

put on your big girl pants,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 42:28

I put on my big girl pants. And I'm just going to do what I need to do and say *Scythe*, always in forever will be my first recommendation to every person. Because I just don't think there's a person who can read *Scythe* and not like it. And very frankly, if you are that person, you don't need to at me. So start with *Scythe* then go to *Magpie Murders* by Anthony Horowitz, because it is such an excellent mystery in the classic sense of mystery, but also modernized, and also an interesting construct for something a little bit different. So even if you've read a lot of classic mystery, you're gonna want to have read this one because it's, it does an interesting thing. And then I'm just going to say you need to finish out with the *Yoga Store Murder*, because that is the best true crime novel ever written. This is my three, I'm just I'm put that's it, my stake is in the ground.

Kaytee Cobb 43:19

Okay, Meredith. Alright, first, I'm going to circle back on the final part of Jennifer's comment, which she said as far as you can tell, I can't read her books right away, but I hoard them and they stare at me for my shelf making me feel guilty for this character flaw, which is actually the reason I picked this comment, even though it did turn into a personal attack on you. So this, this is what happens. It happens that I buy books while Meredith is talking. And it happened today. Because I know I only have two options. One is either I read it before the episode releases, because then people will come and tell me oh my gosh, Kaytee, you would love this. You should grab it. You should totally get *Burn The Negative* by Josh Winning, it'll be perfect for you. And then I say, Well, I'm never going to read it now. Or I wait two full years. Those are the only two options. There's no in between. So I was like, Okay, well, I see that in this list. I absolutely understand what's happening with poor Jennifer here. Yeah. Now my next reveal is that you and I chose exactly the same order.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:17

Oh, we really? Okay. I'm really surprised the *TJ Klune* wasn't in your top. I because I love love love *Under the Whispering Door*. I love that book.

Kaytee Cobb 44:28

Um, you know, it's because I love I love *Cerulean Sea* more than *Whispering Door*? And I don't know, because we don't know anything more than what they tell us in the comment. Right? I don't know if

Jennifer has read Cerulean Sea yet and that's where I would have somebody start with TJ Klune. So that's the only reason that I didn't put it on my list. Yeah, okay.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:47

And right and I it's it's tough between those two, but I like under the Whispering Door just to I mean, if I had to choose that would be the one that I would choose. Yeah, definitely. Okay, so the same order.

Kaytee Cobb 44:56

Yeah. So I went Scythe because that's always the first option, always and next Magpie Murders, it's going to be a change of pace, it's going to be deeper, it's going to be more literary, it's going to be an excellent mystery. And finally, Yoga Store Murder, because again, same exact thing. I was told about it probably four years ago, and then didn't read it till six months ago, because I have a problem. As she mentioned, it's a character flaw. That's my character flaw. And it's just it's so good. And it's like, tear through the pages so fast. You can't even breathe until you finish it, which that was able to eliminate the push for me, which I also loved. Yeah, I thought it was excellent. And if she said, I'm going to read these with a book club, I may have chosen something different. But she didn't. And so those were the three I chose as well. Yeah,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 45:38

exactly. Right, with a little bit more information, you know, we might be able to make a different list. But with this information, I think that this is the right? threesome, it's an awful lot of murder in that threesome week. Like we know that. But it seems like she's fine with that. It seems like she's fine with that. And also, I actually don't look at what you guys are calling a character flaw is a character flaw. But the other thing is,

Kaytee Cobb 46:01

it's a reader know thyself thing. That's what it really is. It is

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:05

for me, for this reader. I buy books, knowing that it might be a really long time until I read them. And for me, I don't look at my books as sitting on the shelves and judging me. I look at my books as their entire point of being like what they most want to do is sit on my shelf, being patiently there for me when I'm ready. So that's the difference. I don't feel judged or feel on any sort of timeline by all the books in my house that I haven't read yet. They're just like, I will be here when you're ready, and it will be the perfect time. So I actually think it's friggin fantastic that Jennifer has these five books that she has hoarded because these are great books. She's got some great reading ahead of her.

Kaytee Cobb 46:51

She really does. I'm almost jealous that she hasn't read any of these five.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:55

Exactly, absolutely. So all right, good. Well, hopefully we have helped both Natasha and Jennifer and maybe given some of you an idea or maybe we've reminded you have a book that you hadn't read that

you're like I have that is on my TBR if you haven't read Scythe, what are you doing with yourself? What are you doing with your life?

Kaytee Cobb 47:15

Truly, I don't even know All right, Kaytee,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:18

let's visit the fountain for a couple of bookish wishes What's your wish this week?

Kaytee Cobb 47:22

Okay, I have an Instagram follow for us this week. So I will wish that everyone would follow Mychal Threets on Instagram and I did have to go down internet rabbit hole to figure out how to say that handle correctly and who this person is, etc. So Mychal Threets is that the handle M Y C H A L 3 T S his last name Threets. That's why his handle is what it is. Isn't that amazing? You know who this person is? Meredith I promise. He has like big, frilly black Afro hair. He is the most joyous librarian you have ever seen in your life. I learned a little more about him to talk about him today watched an interview. Not only did he get his first library card from the branch where he currently works as a supervisor, which what how freaking cute is that? It is, but he grew up as a homeschool kid, which makes him especially close to my heart. The joy that he exudes on his account. He is just full of loving acceptance and excitement over people getting access to books or library cards or learning to read or finding a new favorite story to sink into. It's palpable. It's like a dose of joy. So when I'm scrolling my feed, if I see his happy face and his poofy hair in my feed, I will always stop I will always watch and I will always smile, which is why I'm recommending for my wish that you would go follow Mychal Threets one more time. That's M Y C H A L 3 T S ping slash

Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:55

he is wonderful. I absolutely love him as a follow and also sometimes he's so joyful, and kind video almost makes me feel like a bad person. He's the kind of person and I'm sure that every I'm in no way shape or form questioning that this is authentic I think it absolutely is who he is. But he's the kind of person that I find myself constantly thinking, I would just really like to see you in a bad mood. Like I gotta know that he's capable of being in a real bitchy mood. You know what I mean? Cuz

Kaytee Cobb 49:25

his dummy Instagram account is like Michael for tes Yeah. It's like we're, like,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:32

so done with how stupid people can be at the library.

Kaytee Cobb 49:36

Like, come ask me one more time where the fiction section is. I did exactly exactly like

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:41

he needs an anger translator and that's really, that's really the Instagram account that I'm waiting for? No, but I'm not. He is really wonderful. He's delightful. He's at the Solana County Library which is in

Vallejo, which is very close to where I lived in the Bay Area. They're doing amazing work there and he is certainly a fantastic follow and I'm sure You're just one of the great humans on the planet.

Kaytee Cobb 50:02

Yes, absolutely. All right.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 50:04

My wish is a little bit weird, but I just I need to talk about it with you. So I was reading this article the other day on the New York Times about the kind of renaissance that Barnes and Noble has had in the last couple of years, which of course, we've known about right like my local Barnes and Nobles. Here in the Austin area, I have really noticed they're much more book forward. There's been a lot of discussion in the in the Bookstagram community about the way that Barnes and Noble is doing a lot to be a bookstore again, instead of being like a store that happens to sell books, so I'm all for that. While I was reading this article that cued me in on something that I hadn't keyed in on before, which is that the current CEO the new CEO of Barnes and Noble is James Daunt from Daunt books, the founder of Daunt books in London. Now, to refresh your memory, don't books is the story you heard me tell a couple of stories about where about 40% of the store is organized in London organized like a normal bookstore and 60% of the store is organized by country. So like the Sweden section has nonfiction and fiction, just from Sweden, and there's three stories of it like that. It's absolutely fascinating. One of my favorite stores that we went to when we were in London, he is the new CEO, he is starting this really interesting Renaissance, taking their 600 stores and basically letting each one of them be like going away from the like corporate look, he's he's these new stores, these newly designed stores, they're taking existing stores and giving them facelifts. When they do that, they are not going to look like each other, they are going to look like kind of a big, independent bookstore, and have their own personality, which is, of course very antithetical to the way normally a big corporate entity would do a bunch of storefronts, right? It's very interesting. I'm fascinated by the entire thing. And I'm wondering, Is this good or bad for the book retail

Kaytee Cobb 52:09

world? In your opinion, for indie independent? Or

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:13

do your Indie bit? Yeah, for indie bookstores? Because what happened, of course, was that independent bookstores, there was not a big corporate entity that was selling books very well. And so independent bookstores stood in that. And they said, you know, what, if you're looking to actually buy books from people who want to sell books come to us. And so they recognized a hole in the market and stepped into it really, really, really well. And now, it's not easy to be an independent bookstore owner. And it's not a place where you're going to make a ton of money. But there are a lot of bookstores that are really thriving. So is this Barnes and Noble Assad's a positive thing? Or is it a threat to independent bookstores? I'm just, it's just on my mind,

Kaytee Cobb 52:56

is it going to take some of their market share, right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:58

Or is it good to have a big corporate player in the kind of world of book selling because that brings more heft. And that's helpful to publishers? And that kind of keeps books moving and creates more readers who might go into a Barnes and Noble? And then maybe, maybe they then become really devoted readers? I don't know. I just I don't know how I feel about it yet. I wonder I'm really interested to find out how like an Annie from Bookshelf Thomasville feels about it.

Kaytee Cobb 53:27

Yeah, it is an interesting question. I do know, we've heard from bookish friends who will say something along the lines of my town doesn't have an independent bookstore. Barnes and Noble is literally my only option. So for every single one of those people, a we see you that sometimes it's not always possible to get to an indie, and to have a Barnes and Noble that is also trying to specifically gear itself toward the flavor and the tastes of your specific community, I think can be nothing but a good thing Do I think it's going to impede on the market share when there are indie bookstores a mile away from Barnes and Noble? It's possible. But I also think that those buyers would have already gone to Barnes and Noble, like, I don't know, if they're going to change their minds, we might get more people that didn't go to a bookstore that now are willing to go because of Barnes and Noble doing this thing.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 54:19

Right. So a good Barnes and Noble a books forward Barnes and Noble simply creates more readers, which create sort of all boats rise with the what is that? Yeah. What

Kaytee Cobb 54:29

is that? High Tide boats rise together.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 54:33

A high tide raises all boats? Sure.

Kaytee Cobb 54:35

I like that. Let's go with that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 54:36

Let's go with that. So that's where I would like to land and have that be the case. Because of course, you and I are gigantic supporters of independent bookstores in the lot that we do both personally and professionally. So I'm just watching this particular thing. So we will link to that in show notes because it's a really interesting article. Excellent. Okay, so those were our wishes. Those were our current reads. That is it for this week. As a reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me I'm Meredith at @MeredithMondaySchwartz on Instagram.

Kaytee Cobb 55:05

And you can find me kaytee at @notesonbookmarks on Instagram full show notes

Meredith Monday Schwartz 55:10

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 currentlyreadingpodcast.com.

Kaytee Cobb 55:18

You can also follow the show at [@currentlyreadingpodcast](https://www.instagram.com/currentlyreadingpodcast) on Instagram or email us directly at currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 55:25

And if you want more content, or you want us to boss your TBR become a patron subscriber for \$5 a month you get all of that and you keep the show ad free. You can also rate and review us on Apple podcasts and shout us out on social media. All three of those things help us to find our perfect audience.

Kaytee Cobb 55:44

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 55:50

Alright, until next week, may your coffee be hot and your

Kaytee Cobb 55:53

book be unputdownable.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 55:55

Happy reading Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 55:56

Happy reading Meredith