



Season 6, Episode 15: Creating Bookish Community + Having Hobbies Outside Reading

Mon, Nov 13, 2023 • 53:42

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 you should know we won't shy away from having strong opinions. So get ready.

Kaytee Cobb 00:24

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:33

I'm Meredith Monday, Schwartz, a mom of four and full time co living in Austin, Texas. And I love being booked bossed around,

Kaytee Cobb 00:41

and I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in Arizona, and I look for book community wherever I go. This is episode number 15 of season six. And we are so glad you're here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:52

Oh, Kaytee, do you feel since you're moved to Arizona, that book community has been flowing toward you?

Kaytee Cobb 00:59

Well, I'm trying to manifest that with an episode so we'll see. Okay, it works out or not?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:04

Alright, good. Well, that's what I did when I moved to Austin and it really worked out. So that's, that's what will happen to you. Okay. So we are going to let you guys know later on in the episode we are going to be talking about the concept of reading along with other hobbies. How does it work? Are you a multi multi hobbyist? So we're going to talk about whether we are and kind of our thoughts about that. That will be our mini deep dive later on. But first, let's start the we we always do with our bookish moments of the week. What have you got Kaytee?

Kaytee Cobb 01:35

Okay, Meredith my bookish moment this week is that I finally got off my tuchus enough to get started on forming in person Currently Reading bookish community here in Arizona. We have had a busy few months. But I'm excited to tap into the very large number of bookish friends that live in Arizona, I've already connected with I think I sent an email today to 15 or 17, Arizona bookish friends to invite them to a first meet up. And before that even happens, I also invited them to meet me at an event at Changing Hands bookstore in Tempe where we will get to see Travis Baldree live and in person the day after Bookshops and Bonedust releases. So wow, free event gonna go meet Travis in person. I'll be like, I know you would talk to Meredith but I'm her partner. So it's kind of like you talk to me. Yep.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 02:28

Absolutely. I'm sure he will completely remember who I am automatically.

Kaytee Cobb 02:34

Yes. I will be reluctantly, maybe semi reluctantly dragging along my mother and Shad, who are both very excited that they're going to get to meet our bookish friends as well. So I'm just excited to get out there and see more indie bookstores and do in person book swaps, like we've done in the past and really start building up the Arizona bookish friends community and making them in person friends with each other, which always thrills me.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:02

Yes, that you as we know, it's so it's such a great way to make friends and extend your community. Like I said, that was one of the best things that I did when moved here to Austin. And it's just continued to be really, really wonderful. And knowing that your mom is going to be there that really makes me want to fly out and join you, although it's absolutely impossible. But it would be so much fun day. Yes. Now when I go visit you I can meet your parents you can, that would be really fun. That'd

Kaytee Cobb 03:25

be really great. They want to meet you too.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:28

All right, so let's talk about my bookish moment of the week. Let's do that. One of the things that Roxanna and I have developed in our reading partnership that we have is we have some things that have happened often enough that now they're kind of like a code for us. And one of those is when one or the other of us sends a text that says in all caps. Read this book. Now. This means this is an all hands on deck 911 DEF CON five, you literally drop everything. And you read whatever book the other person is recommending. Now, this of course, with great power comes great responsibility,

Kaytee Cobb 04:08

right? Yeah, so can't be abusing this. You have a friend like that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:11

have to use it very, very sparingly. And one of the last times that she did this for me was with Piranesi. And so we all know that that ended up being one of my favorite books of all time, let alone that I read

that year. So this happened recently. And I'm not going to talk about the book that it was we will talk about it. So don't worry, you will hear about it. But I want to let her be a part of that discussion. But I really just love the notion sometimes of being booked bossed around, I was in the middle of a slump. I'd had a couple of months like with a lot of reading and a lot of reading that was really hitting the mark. And so I knew a slump was coming. That's just how it goes. Yeah. And on the other side of that slump, which is usually for me and in this case about 10 to 14 days. I almost always know, whatever I read next is probably going to be a major hit for me. And this definitely turned out to be the case. So I'm super excited. It was a novella. It's kind of out there. We got to talk about it together. So I will let you know about this. But get you a friend who can text you read this book now. And you just 100% are like, well, this is what I'm reading. I don't You don't have a single one. Like,

Kaytee Cobb 05:27

well, Katie can tell me that. And I will probably do it. But I just get so obstinate, and I hated about myself sometimes, you know, like, even right now, as we sit in record, it's 11. Three, it's November 3, and I know the second Fourth Wing is coming out on Tuesday. And I'm like, Kaytee, it's time Meredith will be thrilled. She's gonna like, it's gonna be great. And I got it off my shelf, even it's sitting on my coffee table, you pregame haven't even cracked the first page, cuz I'm like, I'm like doing it to myself.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:00

Well, but there's no reason to rush it. You know what it means? Because what's happened is now we've come along the second wave of hype, and you know, I'm just gonna go out there and very publicly, this is the most public I can be about this. I have real concerns about the quality of the second book, I haven't read anything. I haven't seen anything. I have no inside knowledge whatsoever. It came out too quick, Kaytee, it came out too quick. We're hearing about lots of problems getting it into the hands of people to get those sprayed edged versions that people pre ordered that they're having trouble with that which is gonna make a lot of people mad. It's like, you could kind of claim printing issues with the first book, but like you had enough knowledge to do right. So I just think it's too quick. For the second one. It's almost 600 pages I'm hearing grow. This tells me that there probably wasn't a lot of editing. I'm very concerned about the quality of this next book. Now, I will be the first person to say I hope I am wrong. I really do. Because you know how much I love the first one. Yes, but the signs the tea leaves are not looking great.

Kaytee Cobb 07:08

magic eight ball says.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:10

Yeah, yeah, I'm a little little nervous. Okay, so let's talk about our current reads. Do you have anything great this week that you're excited to talk about?

Kaytee Cobb 07:19

Yeah, but it's not very current. Although I did just read it recently. I read The Shadow of the Wind by Carlos Ruiz Zafon.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:28

Do you know that this is like the sixth time in the last two days that this book has come across my radar? Johnny's reading it right now and then I've heard about it a bunch of other places. Yes. I love

Kaytee Cobb 07:38

this book. It's because it's the perfect time to read it is it is right after Halloween before you get to your holiday like schmaltzy stuff, Shadow of the Wind November. I mean, this is like peak Shadow of the Wind time, right? Yep. This book is more than 20 years old. It was first published in Spain in 2001, and was translated three years later to English ultimate fall bookish book. We start in Barcelona in 1945. When our protagonist Daniel goes with his father to the Cemetery of Forgotten Books as a young boy grieving his mother's death. Daniel's father is an antiquarian book dealer, which I love that title. So he's around rare books all the time. But the Cemetery of Forgotten Books is a winding library with stacks that you can literally get lost in when his father introduces them to this place. Here's what he says. This is a place of mystery, Daniel, a sanctuary. every book, every volume you see here has a soul, the soul of the person who wrote it, and of those who read it and lived it and dreamed with it. This place was already anxious when my father brought me here for the first time many years ago, perhaps as old as the city itself. Every book you see here has been somebody's best friend. According to tradition, the first time someone visits this place, he must choose a book, whatever he wants, and adopt it, making sure that it will never disappear, that it will always stay alive. It is a very important promise for life. Today, it's your turn, his father explains. So Young Daniel chooses the Shadow of the Wind by Julian kudex. He brings the book home to read it and quickly becomes obsessed with the author attempting to get his hands on all of his work. That quest takes years, which is part of why this book is about 500 pages, and starts with the surprising discovery that an unknown person has been purposefully destroying every book ever written, or published with products his name on the cover. It turns out that Daniel may have one of the only copies left of this author's work throughout the novel. He meets rare book collectors, blind scholars, war heroes and beautiful women. The story within the story is sprinkled throughout the pages and it feels like it comes to life with Daniel's story as well. This book is long but I could not put it down and taking it in on audio was the perfect way to get it into my head with a perfect have Spanish accent and in a fall space when the temperature outside was not cooperating yet, inside my brain, it was right there I was walking foggy streets in Barcelona. This book feels like it should smell like old leather and smoke, it would pair perfectly with a candle that's rich and layered, and the coziest throw you have in front of a fire. It's a whole world to get lost in. It's been captivating readers for 20 years. So I loved the audio version, it's exquisite. But having a paper copy on hand is absolutely necessary as well. It has a section at the back called a walk in the footsteps of the Shadow of the Wind that takes the reader through old Barcelona, including photos of places you see, as you walk the streets. It's as close as you can get to traveling there without actually getting out your passport. And it really adds to the story. I gave this one five stars, and it feels like one that might call me for a reread in three to five years or so because now my soul is part of this books soul as well. I loved it. It's The Shadow of the Wind by Carlos Luis Zafon

Meredith Monday Schwartz 11:03

Oh, I absolutely love it. I love that book. That is one of those books that I really liked it when I read it. And then since then I thought about it so much that I've started to love it. And and I really do think a reread would be fantastic. I think I thought it was going to be faster paced than it was. So I think there

was some expectation mismatch. But once I settled into what it actually was, which is not boring, but it's just a slower burn. It's more it's more evocative. It's more atmospheric than plot driven. I think if I'd gone into it, knowing that I would have enjoyed it even more, and it has some of my favorite side characters of any other book. I mean, there's one side character that I just can't stop thinking about and have never in the two years it's been since I read it. Perfect time of year. Definitely.

Kaytee Cobb 11:49

Oh, I love it. Okay, what do you have first, all right,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 11:53

I also brought something that is great for the tail end of spooky season. I brought it today. And here's some things a little bit weird, Kaytee, I just finished it. And I didn't have time to fully script it. So for this one part of my current reads, you're gonna get something that is completely off the cuff because I just didn't have time to script it. But I also didn't want to wait till next week because I felt like we're at this very specific time of year. So I was finding myself kind of at sixes and sevens and not knowing exactly what I wanted to read next for my spooky season reading. And I was kind of done with witches and that kind of thing. I wanted a palate cleanser. And I happened upon an audible original production called the Creature Feature collection. Now this is six short stories or novellas because they're about somewhere between 60 and 90 minutes at 1.0 speed they are by some of today's hottest mystery and thriller authors, many of whom I have read their other works and really, really loved so I jumped into this. So the idea is that this is kind of a modern take on old school Creature Feature kinds of movies. Okay, so I love this. So I read five of the six of them. And I'm just gonna give you a very, very short kind of my very short take on each one, you can get a sense of it. And then you could also decide which one or ones that you want to read or to listen to. Again, this is an Audible Original are only available on audio on Audible, which I don't do a lot of listening on most of my listening to now on libro.FM, but sometimes audible will pull me in. So you can buy these separately or together you save money if you buy them together. Alright, the first one I listened to is by Paul Tremblay. It's called In Bloom. And this was a take on the Creature from the Black Lagoon, which was very, very interesting and all about this river that has these spores that every 20 ish years or so, very strange things happen. Now, this one, I loved the premise, but he spent a lot of time with the setup. And then the ending is so abrupt that literally I read the reviews because I felt like I was going crazy. And the reviews were like, what happened? It's almost like it dropped off. So I'm starting from least to best right away. Okay. The second one is called Big Bad and it's by Chandler Baker who wrote The Husband which I really liked

Kaytee Cobb 14:28

And Cutting Teeth. Which I really liked. Yes, exactly.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 14:31

So in this one in Big Bad. This is her take on a werewolf thriller. Very interesting. We've got this is domestic werewolf at its best

Kaytee Cobb 14:43

when an apron in the kitchen? No, I'm

Meredith Monday Schwartz 14:45

not going to tell you what exactly that means. Goddess werewolf is its domestic thriller involving werewolves. Okay. Okay. Very interesting. Although I did feel like I saw what was coming, but I liked it better than I liked In Bloom. The third one is by Joe Hill. It's called The Pram and Joe Hill, obviously the son of Stephen King, a horror writer in his own right. The Pram is a scary take on dead babies zombies, it's, it's, it's scary. It's scary. It's a trigger, definitely for issues with infertility, so walk carefully into that one. Then we get to my two favorite ones. Okay, we've got It Waits in the Woods by Josh Malerman. This one is one of those situations. I obviously did this all in audio, the audio production is fantastic in all of these, as you would expect from an audible original. This one had one of those moments of jumpscare and I love a jumpscare in my AUDIO where it is completely out of the blue. My heart was racing. It was fantastic. This is it. It's a somebody's missing, and the sister has to go into the woods to find her situation. But there are creatures being featured. It's very scary. It's very scary. But then we have the fifth and final one of the six there's one more that I didn't get to oh wait math is not good. Okay, fifth that you got to get it right. This is the fifth that I got to there's one more in this collection but I haven't read it and I don't think you're probably well. This fifth one is called Ankle Snatcher and it is by Grady Hendrix. My friends, if you have ever been scared of the boogey man, this one is just going to brightline that fear I will tell you that I now cannot get out of bed without turning the lamp on and my husband is not happy and hoping I grow out of it very soon.

Kaytee Cobb 16:47

To have you Grady Hendrix it's too fresh. It's too fresh.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 16:52

This one is very very scary, but very very good. So for my money the two best obviously are It Waits in the Woods by Josh Malerman and Ankle Snatcher by Grady Hendrix less than two hour if you listen at 1.5 You've got less than two hours of your time spent between these two stories. Put them on your in your library now. Either listen to them now or wait till next year. This is spooky season audible at its best. I absolutely loved it. So it's the Creature Feature collection on Audible by various authors.

Kaytee Cobb 17:25

I'm creeped out just hearing about them. So we'll see when I'm able to get to this. Ankle Snatcher. I have like a thing with feet to like my ankles. I don't know. That just completely freaks me.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:40

It's very, I mean, that story is very, very freaky. I had to turn it off and had to wait until there were more people in the house before I could finish.

Kaytee Cobb 17:49

I kind of love that. Okay, my second one this week is one from our listener press at the end of season five is Going Zero by Anthony McCarten. Do you remember hearing about this one Meredith?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 18:05

I think I do. I think I do. Go ahead and remind them you're gonna remember when

Kaytee Cobb 18:09

I do remember this book. And I do remember Cody and I'm very, very interested in it. So I'm glad that that was a I'm glad that it was a satisfying read for you. Yes, I tell you about it. So this is the newest novel from an Academy Award nominated screenwriter and that will become apparent as I describe it. This is a techno thriller, all our old school Michael Creighton or really old school Dan Brown. If anybody read Digital Fortress by Dan Brown, if you were like DaVinci Code now I must read everything. This is kind of like that genre. It's low on the on page violence but high on suspense. SCI Baxter is the tech mogul at the center of this book. He has been described as a wunderkind and is now trying to launch in partnership with the CIA his new surveillance program known as fusion in order to test its capabilities. 10 Americans have been chosen ahead of the rollout to attempt to go zero, they will get a notification at an appointed hour that the test has started. From that point, they have exactly two hours to attempt to drop completely off the grid and become impossible to find. Fusion uses the technology we would expect of course, like tracking credit and debit cards tracking your cell phone pinging locations using the cameras in public locations to track faces, but it goes above and beyond that with drone strike teams gait analysis and facial recognition software. The goal of this game is to attempt to avoid capture for 30 days and if they are successful, these contestants will win a \$3 million cash prize. If Sci Baxter is successful. On the other hand, he will win a government contract worth \$100 billion and will much like the 2002 film Minority Report be able to save lives with the implementation of his new technology. We follow a few contestants as they're picked off one by one and picked off just means that they're captured by the strike team and they now need to go home. They were not successful and going zero until we're left with a Boston librarian named Kaitlin Day who is unexpectedly confirmed Counting the search team, even when all eyes and resources are focused on her, because let's just remember that librarians are badassess and they should be running the world. And this book is no exception to that. This book brought up so many questions for me about what kind of surveillance and tracking is currently happening, how difficult it would be to truly disappear, and what kind of manpower and technology can and should be implemented to keep us safe. For me it was really interesting and thought provoking and propulsive but got a little bit off the rails by the end so I ended up giving it four stars. Cody is the one who pressed it into our hands and you can find him on Instagram at Cody Hill two underscores. This is not a Bookstagram account. But he is a full time van lifer. He's on the road has a gorgeous feed of all these beautiful places that he hangs out. And I would be willing to bet that if there were a go zero contest, he would be a great contestant because he is like out in the boonies all the time. So I want you to imagine as you're reading this book that you are going zero with Cody in the wilderness in all these gorgeous places where no one can find him. It's really, like I understand exactly why this guy is the one who pressed it into our hands. This was Going Zero by Anthony McCarten. actually, this is one I did on Audible because right after that episode, it went on as a daily deal. So I think it was 2.99 for me to get this audio and I was like well, I guess I'm gonna have to do that. And it was right choice.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 21:38

Right? But most of what we do is on Libro.FM it should be said yes. Right. Okay, so my next book is in my own special sweet spot. I know not everyone loves the business biography as much as I do. But I really really love them. I read Glossy: Ambition, Beauty and the Inside Story of Emily Weiss's Glossier by Marisa Meltzer. You know, the glossy brand heard of glossier? Yes. Okay. So in Glossy we focus on

founder Emily Weiss, who sprung up she sprung to fame, I guess initially, I didn't know this as the Teen Vogue super intern on the reality show The Hills.

Kaytee Cobb 22:19

I didn't watch the Hills. I wasn't even was English to me, right now.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 22:23

It's, it's going to mean something to someone. Okay, so then Emily Weiss, then, really smartly parlays, this fame. And then she creates this beauty blog called Into the Gloss where she goes into people's, like famous people's actual bathrooms. And they let her look at like, what's in their medicine cabinet and their makeup and all of that. So then that gets really big. And she then, because she's smart, and canny, and she's able to get to the heart of why today's consumers buy what they buy. She turns that into Glossier, which becomes a \$1.9 billion beauty business. That's a really interesting kind of order of operations for a female founder. So the book asks, just how did a girl from suburban Connecticut with no real job experience, work her way into the bathrooms and bedrooms of the most influential names in the world and then build that access into this almost \$2 billion business? Is she solely responsible for its success? And why eight years later, did she suddenly stepped down as CEO? So I was all over this story. There's absolutely no question. And I especially love to read stories of female founders and how they built their empires. And glossy is a good one. I read it fast, mostly on my plane ride back from London, it was the perfect airplane book, The prose is readable. And the research the author did was clear. And she concentrated not just on the lurid details, but on the substance of the building of the glossy business that had me thinking critically about the way I run my business. And I was able to take several actionable steps from this and put them into practice that here comes the guide. And that is always a sign of a worthwhile business biography. As I close the book. Upon finishing it, though, I found myself conflicted for some reason. And as I thought about it more, I think I was conflicted about the person and the character of Emily Weiss, because the author seemed to be also. And I think that's the great thing about a business biography. You don't want 350 pages of shameless fawning or unending criticism, right? But all the way through, I kept wondering, why is the author Marisa Meltzer, so ambivalent about Emily Weiss, and I think there's no question that the author was looking for a juicy subject for her book and certainly, there had been some news stories that led her to believe that there might be some issues behind the Scenes at glossier, that would be interesting to uncover, but the reality is what she found was kind of minor on the scale of corporate wrongdoing. Sure, why steps wrong periodically, but then both publicly and privately she does her dead level best to fix her mistakes. And Meltzer documents that but then she seems very reluctant to give her credit for the ways that Emily Weiss made things right. In fact, every time she gives Weis credit or praise, which is wholly deserved, she seems to be chewing glass with her with her words. The truth is she never fully articulate why she's so ambivalent about Emily Weiss, the author, honestly just seemed to not like her. And she didn't have a lot of justification as to why, and that came through in the pros, but that maybe only made this book more interesting to me. I found myself constantly wondering why Meltzer felt the way she felt. And so I read it more carefully. By the end, I'd learned several things about glossier, and the founder and thinks that I could do better as a CEO. And to me, that's the mark of a successful business read, this is Glossy by Marissa Meltzer.

Kaytee Cobb 26:15

Ah, that is interesting. Makes me wonder, yeah, if there was like bad blood between them in the past somehow.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 26:24

I mean, she said that they only met as she started working on articles, and then the book, but it almost felt to me, if I'm being totally honest, what it felt to me is that Emily Weiss would have been a popular girl in high school, and Marisa Meltzer would have been a not so popular girl. And that although they were grown women in their late 20s, and early 30s, when they met, there still was a part of the author that just couldn't get over, not liking what she represented. And so I thought a lot about that, in terms of this happens quite a lot with books about female founders, that there's this issue of, but do I like her? Where in books about male founders? I mean, of course, we have the big examples of books about Elon Musk or, or Steve Jobs, where they almost wear it as a badge, that they are unlikable, right? And What Why is it complicated? Why does it matter? But when, when you read the actual adjectives that she would use, you're like, really? Like, she talked about being clawing ly ambitious. Wow. And I was, really, that is definitely not the phrase that you would use to describe that exact same set of behaviors. And this is coming from a very well educated female author. But again, it made the book more interesting to me because I almost felt like that was a part of I was I was looking for that aspect of it, too. It was a very interesting read.

Kaytee Cobb 27:17

well, and there's like uncomplicated ones like the Bad Blood by John Carreyrou about Elizabeth, what's her face? Like, where it's like, she's not a good person, and I'm allowed to just be spiteful toward her. Yeah. Whereas liking a female founder for some reason why, like, why is that complicated? Okay. My third one this week is nonfiction. It's called It Was An Ugly Couch Anyway, by Elizabeth Passarella. This is pretty new. It's a brand new essay collection that Katie and I picked up together after hearing about it from Laura Tremaine on her podcast, Elizabeth Passarella has a life very completely removed from mine. And yeah, I found plenty of commonality here with her. She and her husband lived in a two bedroom apartment in Manhattan, like even that that's very foreign to me, and had recently decided to sell so they could fit their growing family, kids more kids on the way. That means the very first essay in this collection is where the title comes from. She needs to downsize her furniture, including the ugly couch that has been in her family for decades. It was her father's beloved sofa nine feet long, covered in plaid valore. It stayed cool in the summer and was warm and cozy in the winter. But it was monstrous. And the springs were starting to pop. And the wood was starting to give way and the fabric was threadbare. But it was part of her family history. And her father and at the beginning of this book has recently passed away. So letting go of it sounds really hard, but needs must. And she starts googling weird stuff like how do you scan a couch to see if she can save some of the fabric as like a family heirloom, the scissors make an appearance and eventually a chainsaw does as well to get it to the curb. The story is funny and touching in a way that you wouldn't think talking about getting rid of an old couch would be. It's heartfelt. And that's a marker of the collection as a whole. Throughout these essays, we peek at what kind of stuff is worth keeping and how to call What's no longer serving us. And Elizabeth examines that from many angles from couches to home to the friends that we meet along the way. There's a little bit of a churchy. feel to this sometimes, but it's not a Christian book. So don't let that turn you away. If you think it might, it just feels like sometimes she has kind of a goal and a message

behind what she's telling us. This book made me feel like the hard I've faced over the past six months to a year of letting go and moving forward in many areas of my life was not in vain. Even when it felt hard or hurtful. This was humorous and approachable and made me want to look for more of her goodness in the world. She has another book called Big Apple, bad apple, one of the two. It's another essay collection about New York City. And the interview she did with Laura is worth a listen. I'm so glad I got this one as an ALC from Libro.FM because again, that's where we love to spend our audiobook money. The audio version includes an audio interview with Lois, Elizabeth's elderly neighbor who has a strong through line story in this book. It's excellent in this format, and even if you do read it on paper, finding the audio version, so you can listen to that final interview between those two women is chef's kiss perfection. I did really love this one, even with the sometimes a little preachy town. It was, It Was An Ugly Couch Anyway, by Elizabeth Passarella. Well,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 31:13

we've gotten fairly heavy on talking about things related to audiobooks or our audio book platforms. I'm going to take us to a book that I highly recommend you get in print. Are you ready, Kaytee? This is I love this book. This is Murder in the Family by Cara Hunter. Did you read this? No.

Kaytee Cobb 31:33

But I've seen it of course and heard about it from some of our favorite sources. So tell me about it. All

Meredith Monday Schwartz 31:38

right, mix media alert. Mixed media alert. All right. Here's the setup. I really like the only part of the Amazon blurb that I'm going to use is this first part one body six experts. Can you solve the case before they do? That is such catnip for me. Okay, here we go. Cara Hunter is apparently I didn't know this before I picked up this book and went to London. She is like huge in the UK. She has a bunch of books and a police procedural that she has written in the UK. And I will be bringing the first of that series in probably next next week. But in this case, this is her American debut Murder in the Family. So this is a mystery written as a teleplay of a true crime documentary. Okay, so like, it's as if you're watching the documentary, but you're reading the words. Okay. So it has us working right alongside the investigators of this cold case. And we are reviewing photos, maps, coroner's reports, and tons of other evidence exactly as these investigators do. So here's the case that they're solving. And it was a case that at the time absolutely gripped the UK. But again, this is all fiction. I'm talking about this, like if this is real, this is fiction. In December 2003, Luke Rider, the stepfather of a very famous filmmaker named Guy Howard was found dead in the garden of their suburban family home. Okay, suburban family home. It's like one of the biggest mansions that is actually in the center of London. And that's very interesting. Luke Riders murder has gone unsolved for 20 years. Guy Howard, the filmmaker, his mother and two half sisters were in the house at the time of the murder, they all swear they saw nothing. And despite a high profile investigation, and endless media attention, no suspect was ever charged. So now comes to the sensational new streaming series, which is called the infamous and it is directed by Guy Howard, who was a 10 year old kid and at the house, the night the murder happened, that show infamous is trying to investigate and hopefully finally crack this famous cold case. So these six experts are brought together to re examine the evidence. And there may be shocking results, maybe possibly hope so. I know. Wouldn't it be really upsetting if it was still

Kaytee Cobb 34:00

cold? Well, no idea what happened here? I don't know. But they're British. So they wouldn't say it like that. Right? Exactly.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:07

All right. Well, this was recommended to all of us on All Things Murderful by Elizabeth Barnhill months and months ago, it was definitely one of my most anticipated reads of 2023. And it did not disappoint. Murder in the Family is, as I said, mixed media in the way that I love most in this micro genre. We've got transcripts, documents, news clippings, all the goods. And all of this is brought together in a really interesting construction. This book has elements of the mixed media genre, but it also has elements of the locked room genre, which is so popular recently. And also, it pulls in a third micro genre. We're seeing a lot of reality TV or podcast being featured in a book. And in this case, all three of those micro genres are done really well in one novel. This was the kind of book that I would definitely recommend, as I said, you need to do it in print, don't try it anywhere else, you're not going to want to do it on Kindle, and you for sure are not going to want to do it on audio, I immediately started out this book wanting to use page flags and note taking. Because from the very beginning, I was in the seat of the detective just like our lead characters, I will note that even some of our HSP friends can play along with this particular book because the violence happens off the page. And it is not especially gory, or unsettling. I enjoyed the story all the way through. And I definitely had several guesses as to who the killer was. And all of them were wrong. My note taking actually did not get me very far. Now there were some twists thrown in, in some ways that I felt a little bit disappointed about because the author wasn't 100% letting us play along. There were some things that kind of just dropped in. And they definitely made the story interesting. But if you were interested in solving the mystery yourself, it wasn't something you were going to be able to do. But in this case, I was so interested in the way that story was unfolding. And in the way that the interesting construction was working with the narrative that I was okay with it. While I do believe that this is another example of a book that's about 50 pages longer than it needs to be. I enjoyed it immensely. It really had my little gray cells working and for that it gets four sleuthing stars from me. This is Murder in the Family by Cara Hunter. All right, that does sound fun. Yes, it was really, really good. And I was I read this one in London, and for some reason that would just increased the reading experience. I could hear their voices in my head so perfectly, because that's about during the day. That's all I was hearing. Yes,

Kaytee Cobb 36:44

that's why I liked Red, White and Royal Blue more the second time that I read it because I didn't have the bad London accent in my head. I had the good ones because I was actually in the city. Perfect. Perfect.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 36:55

All right. So those are our current reads. So let's talk a little bit Kaytee about a topic that does come up periodically in especially our bookish Friends Group, which is our group for our Patreon subscribers. There's 2000 people in that group. And so oftentimes, we will hear someone say, what do you do if you have other hobbies? How do you manage all of that? And are you only interested in hobbies that you can do along with readings? Okay, what do you consider your hobbies to be right now in this season of your life,

Kaytee Cobb 37:26

right this second, I would say that I've had a lot of hobbies, I like to dabble. I'm like a hobby taster. Right now, my most intense hobby is that I've picked up crochet a little bit and I'm playing with yarn and crochet hooks in ways that I have not before. And if because I do like to have something tangible, that I can produce with my hobbies. That's why you've heard about watercolor in the past, I've done embroidery projects before. I love a puzzle. That is a forever hobby for me. I can do puzzles all day long. And I have other like more active hobbies too. I like to ski I like to cook and I play cello. And all of those are things that I really can't do very much of while holding a book in my hands. They're not they're not conducive to reading and hobbying at the same time.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:17

That's true. Well, some of them are. I mean, obviously not skiing, cooking,

Kaytee Cobb 38:21

cooking, cook and listen to an audiobook for sure. And you can

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:24

crochet and you can do puzzles. So puzzling

Kaytee Cobb 38:27

for sure. That is why it's one of my favorites actually. Right. Absolutely. And

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:31

I would say I mean, that was right now in this season of my life that was the first thing that came to mind for me is that I really love to do a puzzle and then listen to an audio book at the same time. I have found when we talk about self care, we talk about you know, people had a stressful day to day. Nothing unwinds a really, when my brain gets in that overly contracted kind of headspace after a really difficult or busy day, like listening to an audio book while I do a puzzle. No question. Now what I will say is I have learned about myself and this applies to kind of a lot of hobbies in general that I don't like a puzzle that is too complicated. If a puzzle becomes too difficult, the joy goes out of it for me. And this kind of falls into the category what we talk about all the time reader know thyself, I've been saying to myself puzzler Know thyself and so I just kind of stick to the puzzles and luckily there are a lot of them that are easier for a variety of reasons like the ones that have famous book covers or famous mystery thriller covers or I had just got one that's famous Agatha Christie covers, those are really easy to put together because the words help you in the colors help you and I sometimes I feel like other puzzles are trying to make me mad. Yes. And I don't like to be I don't like that. That irritates me. So I like easy puzzles. And that's when that's one of my favorite things. Now I also knit are, I've gone through seasons of my life right now. But I also don't like it when my knitting gets very complex. I like a good knit and purl back and forth type of situation,

Kaytee Cobb 40:11

right? Give me a scarf, not sock,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 40:13

exactly I can make, I can and have made socks, I've you know, but I like something really, really simple. And I so I've tried different things. And oftentimes, that's what I run up against, is, I feel like I don't want my hobbies to demand too much of me, because I think my job demands so much of me. And so that's something I've just learned about myself. Now. What I will say though, is that I, and a lot of us consider reading and other bookish pursuits to be separate hobbies. So I like to read. And then I like to buy books and organize my books and shelf, my books and research, the books I might want to buy. And I like to fill in my book journal, and I like all the ancillary, bookish things, that's kind of my second biggest hobby brings me a lot of joy. So I don't look at that all as being all one. Because oftentimes, I just want to spend time with my books, but I can't I'm not really in a reading headspace.

Kaytee Cobb 41:17

Yeah, I actually put that spreadsheets are one of my hobbies, because I don't like my job doesn't require a lot of spreadsheets, sometimes I'll work them in for my own edification, but updating my spreadsheet thinking about ways to improve the bookish friends spreadsheet for next year. That is something that I cannot do while I'm reading. My brain can't do both of those things at once. I can't update my spreadsheet while I listened to an audiobook. But it is reading adjacent because that is always what I'm seeking, when I'm doing spreadsheet work is like how can I make this more effective or get better data or make a cool new chart or whatever? And I have to be totally focused on that. So yeah, I agree. And it's a totally different hobby. Absolutely.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 42:01

And we all benefit from the fact that you love to do that. I love spreadsheets. Now. I think there's probably people who are saying to themselves now wait, neither one of them just said that podcasting is their hobby, because it start it started out that way that podcasting was our hobby. Now, how do you fit the podcast into that for you?

Kaytee Cobb 42:21

I tell people that podcasting is my job. And that is be it. That's for a number of reasons. One, we do make a decent income now from currently reading, even though it was a hobby to start, and some people can spend their hobby into an actual job with income and some people cannot. It also is not just as I feel inclined, we are very regimented. The two of us about our release, schedule our bonus content, when things need to be recorded versus when they need to be edited and uploaded. And so it's not like a you know what sounds fun. You we haven't done a podcast in a while. Let's do that feels like a hobby to me.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:04

That'd be hilarious.

Kaytee Cobb 43:05

It was like Meredith, what are you doing? Wanna jump on mic and do a podcast.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:10

What's up? Let's talk about books Kaytee,

Kaytee Cobb 43:14

It'd be so fun.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:15

Well, I agree with everything that you just said. And also, I really want to add that what I love is, it still brings me the joy that it would have brought to me as a hobby, even with that kind of regimented pneum around it. So I just think it's so lucky that it feels that way. And a big part of that is because of Megan, our staffer, you know, production specialist because she is doing the real work of the editing in the show notes and all those things that take a lot of time and a lot of skill. And so all we're doing is literally like, Hey, do you want podcast? Sure. Yeah,

Kaytee Cobb 43:49

it's Friday. What the hey, let's do it. Sure. You got Friday's afternoons available? Yeah, let's do every Friday. That sounds great. Yeah.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:56

So that is something that that kind of fits into both of those categories. But it does help us to be creative. So how then do you respond to people Kaytee, when they say I kind of worry that if reading is my hobby, it should be my only hobby or my main hobby? What but then what if I kind of get involved in embroidery or crochet or knitting or pig farming or whatever it is? And I don't say that derisively. I just mean anything gardening, plants, anything else that all of a sudden you kind of get into that fun first love obsessive feeling? What if that means that you leave your reading behind? Well,

Kaytee Cobb 44:32

for me, I thought about this a lot, actually. Because I would say that reading is a hobby for me. And it's also a part of my identity. Right? Like on my tombstone, it'll say Kaytee, wife, mother reader, right like that. It's core to who I am. And I don't have to do it every day. For it to be a core part of my identity. I still identify myself as a cello player, and I have only played in front of my children on occasion for the past probably A five to seven years I have not played in front of an audience in that period of time. And yet, it's still part of me. So even if I lay down books for a while, in order to start a garden in my backyard, and I can't like physically hold a book with soil all over my hands, it doesn't mean that I'm not a reader. Right. And just because I haven't had a garden in a long time, because our house is not conducive to it in Santa Fe doesn't mean that I don't love gardening. So I think it's okay to hold multiple identities and personalities inside yourself. As far as hobbies go, especially how do you write? I mean, do you still consider yourself a runner, Meredith Do you run still very often,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 45:41

I know, I do not run very often, I do not consider myself to be a runner. But running was never my hobby, it was something that I felt I had to do, that I should do. But I do still consider myself to be a knitter, even though I knit very, very rarely, it all to me goes back to seasons, I've had seasons of my life, where I read a lot and seasons of my life where I didn't read very much at all. And the ebb and the flow is okay. You know, as long as you don't have a book podcast, you don't have to read. And so you can do it. When you feel like it, you can do it a lot. And you can leave it and it'll be there for you when

you pick it back up again. So I think that's really the message that I would want to make sure that people have is, it's okay, I remember having the feeling when I was sort of in my mid 20s, after we I had a young child and lots of life stuff and worked, you know, began to work a big job and thought, am I not a reader anymore? No, I am. I'm just not reading much right now. So know that it will always be there for you. And that applies to any of these hobbies. They just, they can ebb and flow.

Kaytee Cobb 46:47

Yeah. But I mean, that's true for Jason, I would still call Jason a reader. And he used to consider it one of his core identities. And last year, he read two books. And this year, he read one book so far, but it was in one week. It was while we were in London, he blasted through the whole thing. So it's not that he can't read. It's not that he doesn't like to read. It's not a you know, like he just it ebbs and flows. And sometimes there's time and space for it. Sometimes there's mental energy for it. And sometimes the mountain bike calls his name, and that's okay. And they're both part of who he is. And that's okay, too. Right.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:21

Exactly. All right, good. So I would love to know from our listeners, how do you feel about this issue of multiple hobbies? Do you have them? Or do you is reading kind of just your main thing? So we'll start a thread about this on social media. I would love to hear what you guys

Kaytee Cobb 47:36

have to say. Definitely. I'm interested as well. Okay, so let's visit

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:41

the fountain and make some wishes at our fountain. Kaytee, what is your wish this week?

Kaytee Cobb 47:46

Okay, Meredith. Everybody knows that of the two of us. I'm definitely the more mushy gushy. That's true. Yep. So this week, I am going to wish to mark the end of an era. This week, the podcast that is part of Meredith's and my origin story *Sorta Awesome*, announced that it will be shutting down at the end of the calendar year. That means there's only a few weeks left of their nine year run. That's a long time we're in season six and nine year still feels pretty far away. Yeah. Right. Yeah. So Meg made that announcement and I reflected on the show that's been on in my ears for more than seven years, and made me think about all that Meg Tietz and her community have brought to my life. *Sorta Awesome* is where I first heard about and heard Meredith's voice, the group there spurred numerous spin off groups that allowed the two of us to me, and to get to know Mary Heim, who is now a show regular as well, that led to us becoming online friends with each other, it is very easy for me to say that currently reading would not exist would not have been a hobby that turned into a job without sort of awesome having been in the world. So this week, when Meg announced the closing the show, I became very emotional, I cried quite a bit. Because without my Heather, having put *Sorta Awesome* into my ears seven years ago, I wouldn't have so many of the connections, relationships, and even this job that make my life so great today, I am grateful to Meg for the space she created for leading well and living well, and leaving well, and for all the goodies she's put out into the world. So my wish this week is to send Meg along with Happy Trails and best wishes, ping slash,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:25

yes, well, and I will just remind people that at the beginning of the show, when we say we're going to start out with our the way we always do with our bookish moments of the week, that is a hat tip every week to sorta awesome because they start out in a similar way. And we asked Meg in advance of adding that to our show format, if that would be okay with her, because we wanted to offer that hat tip for the place that made it possible for us to have each be in each other's lives. So yes, I agree. You know, leading well and leaving well is not easy to do. And Meg is Fantastic, and I know that she is going to have some great adventures ahead of her and the entire team that she has. It's just absolutely fantastic. So good. Okay, so my wish this week is, again, returning to the audiobook thing we don't normally I certainly don't normally talk so much. No. But I just got to thinking about the fact that so I told you in one of those short stories that I was talking about, where there was this jumpscare moment, and I thought, Oh, I love it, I could name a couple of other books that fall into that category of having kind of this, like, surprise, chill within an audio book, I wish there was a way on one of the big platforms that you could search for that. In the same way that I wish that you could search for maybe an audio book that has a full cast narration or a audio book that includes sound effects, an audio book that includes music or features music as a part of it, or includes extra songs or those kinds of things. I wish there was a way to be able to search for that. And so without

Kaytee Cobb 51:03

being spoilery, though, I think that's the key. Because if you know like this one, there's a great jumpscare it happens to you. Well, no, you

Meredith Monday Schwartz 51:13

couldn't 48 seconds. Yeah, you could do. You definitely couldn't save that, right? It would just be like a playlist situation, it would be like a, you know, like how Libro.FM has all of their playlists, like yes, books with great surprises inside. That will scare the TT out of you like, you know, and then it's a playlist and all you're seeing is the covers of the books. You're not finding out anything more. Yeah. But then I mean, don't you think people would be like, I loved that full cast narration. I want more of that in my audiobook listening. And then you can kind of go one to the other one to the other. Just feel like that's the next level of curation beyond. Hey, what more has this author written? Or what more has this audiobook narrator done? Because that's a search we do all the time. Definitely. This kind of takes curation to the next level. And we all know that the internet 3.0 is going to be all about curation, probably helped by AI. And so I just am hoping that that's something that we get next ping splash

Kaytee Cobb 52:13

ping splash.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:14

All right, Kaytee, 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 52:23

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:27

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.

Kaytee Cobb 52:37

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:44

if you really want to help us you can become a patreon bookish friend for \$5 a month you can get a ton of extra content and help keep this show ad free. You can also rate and review us on Apple podcasts and shout us out on social media. When's the last time you shout it out currently reading a social media this is a great time to do it as we gather new listeners for the new year. Yes,

Kaytee Cobb 53:09

bookish friends are the best friends. Those all help us find our perfect audience.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:14

Sorry, Kaytee. I did a little I did a little swip swap on you. Stick to the script Meredith!

Kaytee Cobb 53:22

She can say the last few words. Sorry,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:25

I'm sorry. All right. Until next week, may your coffee be hot.

Kaytee Cobb 53:30

And your book be unputdownable.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:31

Happy reading Kaytee

Kaytee Cobb 53:33

Happy reading Meredith