



# Season 6, Episode 17: Bookish Intel + When Goodreads Ratings Don't Match Your Own

Mon, Nov 27, 2023 • 59:50

**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** 00:24

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 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 sometimes I need to give a book a few chances.

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:42

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in Arizona, and I have big feels about my books and love to share them. This is episode number 17 Season six and we're so glad you're here. Oh,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:53

you know, we love to hear your your big feels. Kaytee,

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:57

all the big feels. My bite sized intro today is actually a little bit about our deep dive instead of my bookish moments. So that's going on there. Okay.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 01:06

All right. Well, and I will tell you guys, we are going to deep dive today about what happens when Good Reads hates a book you love. There are a lot of big feelings that can come out of this. So many feels so many feelings. Okay. All right. So we're gonna get to that in a little bit. But first, let's start out with our bookish moments of the week. Kaytee, what have you got?

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:27

Okay, I've never done this before. But I am going to spoil a Christmas gift today for my bookish moment because I think it's such a great one. And I want other people to be able to buy it as well. And that means Katie Proctor my love. You need to skip forward to Meredith's bookish moment of the week right now.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 01:45

Yeah, let's see how if she's honest enough to do that,

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:47

we'll see if if nothing else, she won't tell me that she did it. There you go. So just yesterday, I got a package in the mail from an Etsy seller which has Katie's Christmas gift in it. Meredith, I got you one of these a few years back. And I've actually sent the link for the same thing to my husband and said, Christmas gift question mark, because sometimes he needs a little help in this area. Yes, I was tagged in a post by a bookish friend who shared a book embosser with me that can be customized to say from the library of and in this case, it says Katie Proctor, and then within the embossed circle for her is an octopus. Oh, because Katie and I started this like love of octopus journey together. She's the one who sent me *The Soul of an Octopus* by Sy Montgomery, which was the start of this entire infatuation that I have that I'm now known for. Yeah, internet. Yeah. So this kind of helps us circle back to the gift episode we had a few weeks ago like I could definitely buy the *Soul of an Octopus* for a number of people in my life. I buddy read with Katie a lot, I definitely will be buying her a book for Christmas as well. So even if she did listen, it won't spoil the whole gift. But this embosser now has like a little me a little her. And she can put it into any book that she really loves and wants to keep on her shelf. And I love how it looks. I embossed like my bank statements after they came because I wanted to see how pretty. So I'm just very excited about it. I will of course, send link to Megan, if anybody is looking for a book embosser. And this place has lots of different customizations for things that you can put inside the circle. I love it, you You

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 03:17

did get this for me. It's one of my favorite bookish things. Every time I put a book on my forever shelf, that's when I use the embosser. So it's kind of like part of my ritual. So I

**Kaytee Cobb** 03:28

absolutely love it. It's so fun. And it's so it's very satisfying to like, push it down really hard and see that design on the page. So yeah, you

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 03:37

have to have some you have to have some grip strength to really muscle. Yeah, you do. All right. Well, my bookish moment of the week is just sort of the thought that sometimes a book might need a couple of different chances. Right and and also sometimes getting a little bit of information from your bookish friends about a book can help you give it the right kind of chance. Let me tell you what I mean. So everyone knows we've talked a million times Kaytee about our abiding love for Travis Baldree and *Legends and Lattes*. Yes, yes. And so several months ago, now, I was lucky enough to get an advanced reader copy of the new one, which is *Bookshops and Bonedust*. And I was super excited and

pretty quickly made it my next read. And I started it I was reading on Kindle. And it was not exactly what I was hoping that it was going to be. And so because I love Travis so much. I was like, You know what, it's probably just my mood. I'm gonna set it aside a couple weeks later, I was like, Okay, I think I'm ready. I think I'm in a good place. I started it again and again, because it's a prequel and we kind of meet the lead character when she's in the mercenary part of her life, which is not what I was hoping the book would be about. I set it aside again, and since then, I have many in many different social bookish social situations. mentioned like I wanted to love it so much, but it just hasn't been for me. But several people recently including one of my favorite bookish friends Betsie Ikenberry have read it all the way through. And Betsie said to me, here's the deal. Meredith, what you need to do is get through the portion that is x. And she told me what the thing is. What the with the kind of point in the story is. And she said, from there, it's exactly what you want it to be. Have you read it Kaytee?

**Kaytee Cobb 05:27**

I'm 50% in right, okay. Okay, so

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 05:30**

you would agree with what you're hearing? Yeah.

**Kaytee Cobb 05:32**

As soon as, as soon as you get past just really the setup section. Okay, where you have to figure out what's going on with Bev and why are we here and why she injured, which is the setup for the book. There's not any spoilers there. Yeah, then you get into this small town, and you start to get some of those cozy feels that we love so much. I'm excited

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 05:48**

to pick it up again. Now I know, okay, I can read this first part, and I can relax into it. Because we're not going to be in this first part forever. So sometimes you have to give a book multiple chances. And sometimes you have to get a little bit of information. And then you give it another chance. So that's what I've been thinking about. Yes.

**Kaytee Cobb 06:04**

I love that. I also slightly spoilery I think you should probably check your mail, because I sent you something that might get you more excited about this book. Oh, okay. That's probably won't be there around now. Because I think I mailed it on Monday. So okay,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:20**

all right. Well, even more exciting. I love it. Well, and this is one of the things we're... I pick up lots of books that aren't for me, and I set them down. This one was just it just hurt my heart to not you know, so I just want to love it too much because we love him. And we love Legends and Lattes and the whole world that is created in in these books. So I'm really I'm feeling really hopeful again. All right. Kaytee. So let's get into our current reads. What's your first book this week?

**Kaytee Cobb 06:45**

Okay, Meredith my first book is cozy fantasy. I'm going to talk about a rec from The Novel Neighbor from the October indie press lists. We brought a lot of these already. This one is The Story of the 100 Promises by Neil Cochrane. For this reader right here. It was gold. The publisher bills this one as a loose retelling of Beauty and Beast. So let's see if we find that in this setup. Dara Thorne is our main character. He's made a decent life for himself after leaving his home 10 years ago because his father doesn't accept him as the man that he is. Now that said father is dying, his sister has asked him to return home and attempt to reconcile. When Dara finally sees his father, he is sure that a particular Enchanter can help heal him the father. This Enchanter was the one who gave Dara the magic he needed to become his true self those many years ago. But the problem is that no one has seen this guy for a full century, and the only ideas he has about where to find him are based on fairy tales and legends that usually end in death for the Explorer. So it's with a determined resolve that Dara sets off on this quest to find the enchanter. Hopefully heal his father, and maybe a little bit of his hurting heart in the process as well. This book has found family in it. So you know, I loved it. It would also happily sit on the cozy fantasy shelf next to Legends and Lattes, which we love. And another pick from the second month that we had with Novel Neighbor, which also had wonderful cozy fantasy vibes. It has an adventure center, but there's nothing extremely difficult or heartbreaking. That happens in here, the callbacks to classic fairy tales, including thorny rose bushes and creatures in the woods and a wise fox that accompanies Dara on his quest, make you feel like you're in share hands with this writer. But this book has very few reviews on Goodreads less than 200 of the time that we're recording today. And the only negative or slightly negative reviews I found were ones that were really disappointed in the loose retelling and the publisher setup, because it's basically the Lacroix of Beauty and the Beast, like somebody whispered the word Beauty and the Beast over the manuscript before it went to print. But there's not actual Beauty and the Beast stuff happening in here. So if you pick this up, and you're like, yes, A Curse so Dark and Lonely, loved it. Beauty by Robin McKinley loved it. I love feeding the beast retellings, this one is going to be a hit for me, you're not going to find it, and you're going to be disappointed. And that's when you go give it three stars or two stars or one star on Goodreads because it doesn't have those elements that you're hoping for when you read that very first sentence of the publisher setup. Instead, think of it more like a cozy fantasy adventure story with really fantastic queer representation. And you'll come out ahead every time I love this one. It's purple. I will mention I hope more readers pick it up and put it in the purple section of their bookshelves. It is The Story of the Hundred Promises by Neil Cochrane. All right, Meredith, what is your first book this week?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:40**

All right, well, we're going from cozy fantasy to murder by car and so this is a big left turn. Okay, we're going to talk about Mr. Mercedes by Stephen King. Oh, here's the setup. In the quiet light of an early morning job fair a luxury car. I'm Mercedes plows through a crowd of people who have waited all night in line for a chance at employment. And this crime leaves eight people dead and countless more injured. The city is in shock. The perpetrator remains at large and the police are left with very few leads. Then Bill Hodges, and now retired detective receives a letter from someone claiming to be the Mercedes killer. This Chilling note is not only a boast about the crime, but it's also a direct challenge pulling Bill Hodges out of his retirement and into a very personal and very deadly game of cat and mouse. Okay, this is one of those books that had me asking, Why did I not read this book sooner?

**Kaytee Cobb 10:47**

Like, oh, this is not gonna be good. Yeah, no,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:50**

this is a five star police procedural mystery thriller, serial killer book, it couldn't be any more up my alley. And yet, because I have conflicted feelings about Stephen King, or the works of Stephen King, I haven't hadn't read it yet. And I'm so glad that my good friend Alex Cox made sure that she pressed it into my hands with an emphatic recommendation, actually, more than one if I'm fair. This book has, as I said, everything that I love, it has amazing writing. It has a through line of scorching plot. It has a perfect ending. It has found family it has character development in spades, and it has just enough Gore to make me interested. It has characters that I care about enough that I definitely want to see what happens in the further books, because this is the start of a series. It also has a terrible villain, and a great lead character. I love Bill Hodges. It has mental illness representation that has you high kicking because people with mental illness can also be people who are amazingly powerful. And I love the way that that appears in the story. This book made me laugh, it made me cringe. It gave me a couple of scenes that made me want to peel my bookish eyes out of my head and never see them again. And it even brought tears to my eyes. Now I did this on audio and I highly recommend it this way because the narrator Will Patton does the job perfectly. Think he does, if not all than most of Stephen King stuff. You can bet your last bit that I am going to be reading further in the series. The next one is called finders keepers. Thank you so much to bookish friend Alex for making sure I read this. She truly knows what makes my heart go pitter patter. This is Mr. Mercedes by Stephen King. Alex is a pretty surefire recommendation source for me too. Yeah. And she's like Kaytee. I don't know if you heard of this book, but maybe you might want to think about looking into it. Then I'm like, okay, Alex, I see what you're doing here. And yes, I'm buying it today. Ya know, she really does get a good sense of people. And she's careful with her recommendations.

**Kaytee Cobb 13:02**

Yeah. Excellent. All right. What's

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 13:04**

your next one?

**Kaytee Cobb 13:04**

Okay. My second one is nonfiction. It's called Good Inside by Becky Kennedy. Dr. Becky, if you will. This parenting book released over a year ago, but I felt like this summer is when I really started seeing it sweep through the internet. And that's when it came onto my radar. This is a parenting book, but it's also applicable to anyone who interacts with humans in any capacity. It's about giving grace to people who make mistakes, whether they're full adults or tiny humans, they can be your students, your co workers, your parents or your hideous progeny. Here's part of the way that the publisher sets it up. Millions of parents are tired of following advice that either doesn't work or simply doesn't feel good, have embraced Dr. Becky's empowering and effective approach a model that prioritizes connecting with our kids over correcting them. From award charts to timeouts many popular parenting approaches are based on shaping behavior, not raising humans. These techniques don't build skills that kids need for life or account for complex emotional needs. Add to that parents complicated relationships with their

own upbringings. And it's easy to see why so many caretakers feel lost, burned out and worried they're failing their kids. So Dr. Becky, can you hear this? I don't like that. We call her Dr. Becky. What's her Instagram handle? Everybody refers to her as Dr. Becky,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 14:22

you gotta go with it. Yeah, yeah.

**Kaytee Cobb** 14:24

So we have to call her Dr. Becky, right, whatever. Anyway, she says she has different tips and strategies that help parents move from uncertainty and self claim to sturdy leadership with their kids. That part sounds really good to me. Here's how it worked for me. I listened to this one on a long drive, which I like to do for nonfiction, especially parenting nonfiction, where I've read quite a few of them and I don't need every single detail, right? I'm not going to like highlight case studies. I just want to get a really good feel for the book and let it kind of nestle into my brain a little bit when Becky gives examples of the ways that children do Hey Are misbehave, she often relates it to adults in the same situation. And that's the part of this book that really stuck with me. So the crux of this book assumes that each of us parents and children and spouses and family members and employees is good inside, that when we have a behavioral outburst of any kind, it's not typically because we are malicious, especially if it's out of character for us, it's because we maybe need a bit more compassion from the person we're interacting with. Maybe we didn't sleep well, or we ate garbage snacks during our break today. Maybe we feel overstretched. Maybe we have too much homework or housework to make good decisions. But that doesn't change our internal value and worth we are good inside. The truth of matter is that I sometimes have to remind the adults in my life like somebody I love very much, that scheduling mishap or having too much going on to be fully engaged in conversation does not diminish their internal worth, it was a great reminder to me. And for me, I also really loved the reminder that I wouldn't be encouraged if my senior citizen mother tried to give me a chore chart checklist or put me in timeout if I was a bitch to her because I was tired. And it was a great reminder in my parenting strategies as well, that children also might not respond to those strategies, because as adults, we don't like that. So why would they? I don't think this is especially groundbreaking per se. It's very golden rule esque. And I don't really understand why it swept the internet the way that it did. But it was a really great reframing for me to think about these people that I'm trying to raise as humans and how good inside they already are. And that I did appreciate. This one is Good Inside by Dr. Becky Kennedy. All

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 16:43

right, interesting, but I like the fact that you were able to take some nuggets even if you didn't need to take all of it. It doesn't need to be a perfect book to be useful.

**Kaytee Cobb** 16:53

Definitely. All right, good. Okay,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 16:55

we're just gonna take it we're gonna go back to murder and then we're gonna see saw it's like a seesaw back and forth. Here we go. Okay. This one is called With a Kiss We Die by L. R. Dorn. Here's the setup. Rihanna Reigns is the host of a popular True Crime podcast. She specializes in deeply

investigating her stories and telling the tales with her trademark Moxie, and she has millions of fans. So when an out of the blue very intriguing message is left and her tip line Rihanna can't resist. The bodies of a husband and wife have been discovered in their multimillion dollar estate in Southern California. The prime suspects are their 22 year old son and his girlfriend to college theater students who are now facing arrest. But they don't want lawyers in a surprising move. Or maybe not so surprising. What they want is to speak to Rihanna offering exclusive access and interviews in exchange for her getting their story out to the public in advance of any trial that might be coming up. Through this series of interviews, which we get to read Rihanna tries to figure out who is the real victim who is lying, and who is the killer. All right, this was recommended to me actually, that arc was given to me by Elizabeth Barnhill, I'm making that distinction because all of a sudden, I can't remember for sure if Elizabeth actually read it. So I don't want to say that she recommended it unless I can say that for sure. She just made sure I got the art because it sounded like something I would like and she was totally right. And I saved it till I was in the right mood. And there were a lot of things that I liked about this book. First and foremost, very quick read the format makes it really easy to read. And I finished it in just a day and a half, though it has a complex plotline. And this LR Dorn, by the way, are a married couple. So there's it's two authors who are writing the book. And they did a really good job of wrangling this complex plotline. So that they were careful that at the end, there wasn't like these glaring plot holes. I've read several books recently, especially that fall into this category of like, and there's a podcast or mixed media, this kind of thing, where the problem is there have been some pretty like holes, you could drive a semi through in the plotline, they do a good a good job of keeping that from happening here. But there were a couple of things about this book that I really struggled with. This is billed as I mentioned as being mixed media, but it's not really mixed media. Let's be clear about that. This is really just a book that is in the form of a podcast. I read it in print. And I wonder if it would have been a completely different experience. If instead I had done it on audio, that actually would be an interesting point to explore in print the format, especially in the first half got really tiresome the fact that this was a podcast where they had to kind of repeat themselves over and over again at the beginning of every chapter, which was also the beginning of a new episode really meant for me that there was a lot of eye rolling repetition. And the first half of the book was very focused on the young couple and they were just so This couple was so self involved, that I started to get a little bit impatient. But then the second half of the book comes, and we get a complete change in the pacing, and the lens of the mystery. And my interest in the story was reclaimed. I absolutely flew through the second half. And I could not wait to find out the resolution. As I mentioned, this book is not perfectly written from a sentence level perspective, it feels a little bit novice in its prose. But the plot and the pacing here is so strong, especially in that second half that I was able to overlook it. But again, make sure you're in the right mode. If you are always interested in the Menendez murders, then this is going to definitely be a great book for you. And if you like crime fiction that keeps you guessing all the way through. Also, this could be a hit for you. This is a very interesting way to spend some of your time if you're in a murder full mood. This is With A Kiss We Die by L R. Dorn. And that is a quote from Romeo and Juliet.

**Kaytee Cobb** 20:59

I was going to ask because I was like, Wait, that sounds familiar. Okay. Well, I did look it up. But while you were talking, there are 16 narrators on this book. So there's just a full cast recording. This is like a full cast in all caps. Yeah.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 21:14

Yeah. If you're interested at all in this book, I would definitely say try it out on audio before you do anything else. I just really think that might completely change the experience. Yeah,

**Kaytee Cobb** 21:23

it does sound like one that would be perfect in that format. Yeah. And if you

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 21:27

like college theater, kids, this will be up your alley. Meredith

**Kaytee Cobb** 21:31

Do you love college theater kids?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 21:33

They're great. I love them. I wish I wish. That's all I spent my time with.

**Kaytee Cobb** 21:37

Excellent. I love that for you. Okay. My third book actually has a little college theater and it's Tom Lake by Ann Patchett.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 21:46

Oh, god, okay. Here we go. You can take

**Kaytee Cobb** 21:50

a bathroom break or something if you need to. Okay, I had to check three different ways to make sure that I or one of our show regulars had not brought this one to the show already. But I'm safe. Roxanna did mention it briefly as if you liked this, you might like this as well. I didn't plan on picking up this book, especially not the hardcover of this one. But it's one of very few books that Katie legit told me I needed to buy. We had just finished reading another book together, and she couched this forceful recommendation as this is the perfect one to read after the one we had just finished *Animal Vegetable Miracle* by Barbara Kingsolver. I joke that I'm so against this high pressure sell in all forms, but she gently suggested that I should, the quote is maybe probably in parentheses, get it. I asked her about 14 different ways if I would actually like it. And then I did get it and was finished with it within just a few days. And I cried, and I hugged it just like she predicted. Here's the setup. We meet Laura, who's hosting her three grown daughters at the family cherry orchard in Michigan, they have returned home because of the pandemic. And because of social distancing, they only have each other in their little family bubble to interact with. They pick cherries together during the day and eat together around the table at night. And during those long hours in the orchard or at the table, they asked their mother to tell her story. The one about Peter Duke, who went on to become a really famous actor, but was also just a boy in a play that she fell in love with the one who played opposite Laura, when she was cast as Emily in *Our Town*, as a young adult, the story is gentle, and that it moves back and forth through space and time. But it's not a giant plot driven roller coaster. However, I still had multiple moments where my jaw dropped because of one reveal or another. I loved the way that n patches unfolded this story. And I love the fact that I read it at my mom's house this summer, where I also sat around the table with my parents



and ran errands together and worked on projects and told stories. It felt like it could not have come into my life at a more perfect time, unless it had existed at the very beginning of a pandemic. And I couldn't read it then because it didn't exist. So the only hypothetical scenario that would have been better is one that could not have happened. This lovely story is narrated by Meryl Streep, who we all know is national treasure. My spiciest opinion about this book is that I don't have big feels for Meryl Streep one way or another. So I did not listen to this on audio. I didn't need the image of the actress in my head as Laura's voice. I'm sure it's lovely. Meryl Streep is probably a lovely woman. bookish people far and wide have raved always good things about this narration. And if you've loved it, I love that for you. For this reader, I had to read it on paper. I had to form my own ideas about these characters and create them and draw them for myself in my head. I had to read their words so that it felt like I was in the story in a different way than if someone told it to me, and that's probably pretty personal. But I will see that the same thing happened. And I think it will happen again with *The Dutch House* by Ann Patchett, which Meredith and I disagreed on pretty forcefully. And I think it's because I listened to the Audio. And Tom Hanks really distracted me with his Tom Hanks Enos in the audiobook, and I know that when I'm ready to come back to that book again and read it on paper, it will be a better experience for me for that exact same reason. So all that is to say that if you've tried this one on audio, because you heard it's the actual best with Meryl's voice in your ears, or if you didn't like Tom's narration of *The Dutch house*, maybe you reader a reader like me, and the famous person telling the story does not in fact add to it for you. But the words on the page will land differently. I'm very glad they did for me as it ended up being five stars, and will probably be on my favorites of the year list. This was *Tom Lake* by Ann Patchett

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 25:42

I'm so glad that that worked for you. And I think he made a really good point about print versus the narration. I think that that's a you know, I think that that's really valid. I have a theory about *Tom Lake*, which I read, probably 35% of and then I set it down because reader know thyself. No, I did not set it down. Because it's not a great book, because I think it absolutely is, I set it down because here's my theory. And I could be totally wrong. And this does will not apply to absolutely everyone. But I've talked to a lot of people about it. And what I see is those of us who who had and still have really warm, cozy close relationships with our parents are tending to love this book, okay, and those of us who are not, as adults in a warm cozy relationship, or maybe didn't have that, as children are finding this book really hard, maybe even for reasons that we have a hard time articulating. So this is my theory, you know, again, that is not going to apply to everybody. We are all so deeply individual with these things. But that's just a working theory that I'm just kind of noticing as I pay attention to who like who really falls into it and loves it loves it. And who really struggles with it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 26:55

I like that. And in my own life. I can see some of that concordance as well with the readers that love it and the readers that have not loved it as much. Yeah, yeah.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 27:06

So But absolutely, probably one of the the best and certainly one of the most critically, well reviewed books of the year. All right. Well, I am super happy to be able to take not a left turn, but a twirl around in four circles because I'm going to now talk about a book, a little book, a little tiny book called *Unhinged*.

**Kaytee Cobb 27:27**

Thank God, God, I have this for so long. And I'm like, when is Meredith gonna finally force us to talk?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 27:34**

Okay, first of all, here's what I'm gonna say. And again, you guys know I mean it when I say this, this is a content warning. This is a content warning, you need to take really, really seriously because even me talking about it for just the smallest little bit. We'll invite questions that trust me when I say you don't want to answer them. So let's go ahead and make sure we are all consenting adults here in the room. I'm gonna give you guys a second to do this because we take your ability to let kiddos listen to the show really seriously. And we, you know, my kid listens to the show. So content warning. All right, here we go. I'm going to talk about Unhinged by Vera Valentine.

**Kaytee Cobb 28:15**

I'm gonna give you the setup is the setup as long as the book

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:18**

No, no, almost. I tried. I'm really I'm trying real hard to keep the setup short. All right, here we go. Like I worked a long time on the setup because there's a lot of different ways I did not want to talk about this book, our lead character, and I'm going to use the word character loosely is Tana who she's just living her day to day life, not realizing that she has a very dangerous stalker. Okay. And then she has a dream and a man appears to her in her dream to warn her about the stalker, and this man tells her that her life is in danger, but he also tells her in the stream. I'm gonna say it, he is her front door. Now, let me say that again. You didn't miss hear me. The man who appears in her dream is her front door. Tana initially chalks this weirdness up to late night snacks that didn't mix well. But then another girl goes missing and the stalker starts getting desperate because law enforcement is closing in. And Tana's life is in serious jeopardy. So her front door may be her best hope. So can this inhuman companion save her? And what the heck else will they get up to? Well, this is all going on. Okay. This is not my usual fare. I read this book out of pure curiosity and then closely followed by peer pressure. Jaysen Headley from ezeekat posted the most hilarious reaction video yes, and I hope we can find that and post to it because that video is worth the time it will take you to read or just listen to me talk about the 71 pages just To see him react to it because it is so, so good. But then as soon as that came out and we were kind of all sharing that I started getting flooded with DMS from people saying, Please, please read this and bring this to the show. All right. Again, I have to ask is this my legacy? But alas, who am I to keep the door closed on such a riveting premise? This book right up at the top on the cover, it says that it's an erotic door romance. Okay, so we're all clear about what we're talking about here. This is very open door.

**Kaytee Cobb 30:35**

I can't help it in so many ways. Alright. Is

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 30:38**

it good? No, it's not good in any way that we would usually say that a book is, is good. It's not high quality literature. But honestly, when I pick up a book like this, which is almost always on Kindle Unlimited, I'm not looking for great literature. I know that that's when I'm not going to get. But this book is short, as I said, just 71 pages, and it's different. And it's an erotic door romance with a murder

mystery woven into it, but I hated the lead female character so much. I guess I can take weird sexy romance if I like both of the characters. But here, she was just kind of a vapid jerk. So it wasn't going to be another Dragons Bride for me, but two things. I did like the way that the author made this very weird premise. Makes sense. I thought it was pretty neatly done. Like how does the door become a man I thought that was I thought that was kind of nifty. And I kind of loved the character of the door. But his name was Driss and nobody likes the name drip horrible. It's a horrible name, but horrible name. But he's my jam. He's my door jam,

**Kaytee Cobb** 31:46

or your jam.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 31:47

He's my he's my jam. But secondly, at least once a year, I like to bring a book that's really out there from a romance perspective to just normalize that all reading is okay. I can read national book award winning books, and I can read Open Door Door romances and it all makes me a reader. So again, say it with me read what you like. This is Unhinged by Vera Valentine. Excellent. Now, Kaytee, I did appreciate the fact that you are a true friend. And I read it on Kindle. Because you guys know I have to read My sexy time. I can't listen to it. But what this book is known for is the audio because the audio has sound effects. It does. It does door sound effects during the sexy time. Kaytee, you you manage to send me like 40 seconds of the audio with the bowing in the rear rear ear and all of it was taking one for the team to get that audio for me and send it I really appreciate it. Well,

**Kaytee Cobb** 31:51

it did take quite a bit of effort. Audible has figured out how to prevent people from doing that. So I had to figure out some workarounds in order to send that small chunk of audio and I was very proud of myself by the time I actually did so. But it took listening to that scene like seven times to same with the point of the doorstopper at the end and me just being like, what am I doing with my life? How is this?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 33:17

How is how have I arrived at this place? How have I arrived at a place where 50 people sent me a DM asking me to talk about this book on the show? Like you're known for octopus, what am I known for?

**Kaytee Cobb** 33:31

It's very special. It's a very special niche that you occupy. I did listen to this entire book, which it's like an hour and 50 minutes long, which I don't understand how that is possible on a 70 page book. Why? Why would it take two hours to tell you 70 pages where the content? I do not know

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 33:49

how long was it for you though? Like 15?

**Kaytee Cobb** 33:52

I listened to it in like 35 minutes, right? Right, maybe 45 minutes, but I actually boosted my star rating by one because I sent live messages to Katie and Shad. As I read I spoiled the entire book for them. And I gave them all the nitty gritty, the dirty hinge jokes, the I sent that audio to them as well, that really

added to the experience for me. And now we have this shared collective vocabulary that we can refer to whenever we need to, like Well, is it bigger than a deadbolt? Because that's what did she have to throw away the Ottoman after because the I mean, so we just there's a lot going on with this book. And there's a lot of novel humor friends that are willing to to get on that boat ride with you. I guarantee your life will be richer for it. Even if your reading life was not richer for it. Exactly.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 34:44

Exactly. That's, I mean, that's the thing. Sometimes you just have to do something because it's part of the experience. Yes, there are lots and lots and lots of much better written romance out there. And also I am very comforted by the fact that no matter what What your kink is, There is somebody who has written a book about it. And that is, that's comforting to me. I

**Kaytee Cobb** 35:06

think it'll it'll be a new level if we bring any Chuck Tingle to the show, because those are the ones I get sent to me like, Kaytee, can you read this one? It's that my lifeguard is my boyfriend. And also he's a banana. What? Did he just shake? You know, like dice that had different nouns on them and throw them on the table and decide to write a book about it? What what, right,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 35:26

exactly, exactly. All right, so those are I mean, that is a cornucopia of books. We went from her and patch it to unhinged in one episode. I love it. I love it

**Kaytee Cobb** 35:39

stops at murder and parenting. Right. Life is

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 35:42

a rich tapestry. I love it. Okay, let's talk about our deep dive. Then let's talk about deep feelings, big feelings, deep feelings, everyone can come back in by the way, our content warning section is over. So feel free to come back in. Everything is safe. Our deep dive today is about what happens when Good Reads hates the books you love. Kaytee, now, we had a listener at @theLinenFox recommend that we talk about this. And this was a great idea for a deep dive, although I didn't quite know how I was going to tackle it. Because I don't really use Goodreads, right? For any part of my my own reading tracking. So how was this for you? How did you tackle figuring out if Goodreads hates the books you love?

**Kaytee Cobb** 36:27

Well, I do log my books on Goodreads. And then I use that data to fill out my spreadsheet. So it's like my quick and dirty check check check method of getting a book kind of off my TBR and onto my currently reading shelves. And then it's a complicated process for me to use that data to actually fill in my book spreadsheet after the fact for my start and finish dates and my publication dates and all that other stuff. Okay, so I do see Goodreads, multiple times whenever I start and finish a book. And I have over the past few years, especially I would say six years now that we're on season six, Episode 17 I'm currently reading, I have cared less than less about what anybody else thinks about a book than I did. Way back in the day when Goodreads was one of the only places that I talked about books or that I had kind of a public platform because it has a social media component to it regarding books and book

reviews. So now I will go look at a Goodreads rating and review after the fact. Sometimes, I will be very surprised by the fact that the internet does not agree with me in any way about such and such books that I read. Sometimes it's surprised, in a good way in that, wow, they all don't think this book is good. And I know that it's excellent because I am right about my own reading life. And sometimes it's surprised in a bad way in that I mean, not a bad way. This is still in quotes, in that I am giving a book two or three stars. And I go and I'm like Why? Why is it 4.2 stars on Goodreads? I know, what are what did all these people read that I did not find in this book. Yep. And so there can be a big discrepancy in there. And if you're used to referring back to Goodreads ratings on the regular or if you use that as your sole source of your TBR. So every time you're considering a book, you go look at Goodreads and you click on it, and you add it to your shelf and you see what other people rated it then yes, it's probably going to affect how you feel about a book. So she brought up a specific one that had been recently discussed on the show and discussed with order and excitement. And then it had a 3.4 rating on Goodreads, which I would say anything below about a 3.8 on Goodreads, people are not really enjoying like as a as an overall arching thing. Right.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:49**

This was one of the things that I was getting a sense of is like, what is kind of that threshold? What is not good? And what is like, okay, you know, because everyone's reading systems are different, right? I learned because I actually spent quite a bit of time going through because I had to like cross reference books that I like with because I couldn't just neatly go through a list. And so I had to cross reference. So I was like searching all kinds of books and and realizing that yeah, I would agree that 3.8 seems to be kind of that threshold above which people like it and then below which most people are not loving it that much. But when you dig down further, like what was the book that I was looking at? I was looking at Search by Michelle Huneven. And that was a five star read for me. It was 3.88 on Goodreads but it only has 4000 ratings. So obviously that comes into play too. Right? How many ratings that a book has and so I was thinking like okay, so then I read down to the I just decided let me just read the three star reads for search and the majority of people who are rating it three stars were like, No, this is a really quality book, there's a lot to enjoy about this book. So I just, there was something about it that just made me go, how do you? How do you use the Goodreads ratings in a way that is really useful for you? I almost feel like you have to figure out where you fall? Are you a person who tends to really agree or disagree, like your ratings are very different? Because here's the thing, I looked at it, I looked at dozens of books. Yeah, the one she pointed out was Kill Show, which is a book that I that I brought, which I think I gave, I ended up giving four stars, but had the 3.4 on Goodreads, that was actually a real outlier for me, because and I don't know if this is, like says a bad thing about my reading. A lot of the time, my own personal readings, were kind of in line with what it was getting on good rates. So like, does that mean I'm a basic B reader? I mean, what like, I don't know, maybe it means good reads can be useful, a useful thermometer for me,

**Kaytee Cobb 40:56**

it could mean that I think what you're saying also about the number of people that have rated a book really matters as well, because those ratings get distilled into much more of an average rating than like a median made rating. Right. I also think it's important to like it's, it's more interesting to me to be very different from the average rating on goodreads and have that disparate strong opinion than it is to say, I you know, I'm a basic be because I fall in line with what other people think about these books. That just

means other people feel the same way. Like, I don't think that means anything interesting. It's more interesting to find the places where you do diverge. And it could be this one that maybe was a four or five star and other people hated it. But it's even more interesting. If you find something that has lots of good reviews, and you yourself as a reader, give it two stars. And you dive into what makes the Goodreads community feel different that like the reader community as a whole than I did. What made this book not work for me in a way that it is working for so many readers, and that could be something like Fourth Wing, although fourth

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 42:04

wing has fantastic ratings like 4.6 for something right. But

**Kaytee Cobb** 42:08

of course there are people who do not love Fourth Wing, right? There's got to be some people out. Oh, for sure. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Or this book I talked about at the beginning The Story of the Hundred Promises I mentioned, it had 170 ratings today on Goodreads, just ratings not even reviews. So few people have read this book. So does it matter that it's averaging? 4.2? Maybe not, because it hasn't been read widely enough to really understand it. But for that author, it probably matters, it probably feels really great to have a 4.2 star rated book on Goodreads, right for sure. People that do pick it up, tend to enjoy it. And probably because those readers know themselves. And they are able to find this book that exactly matches their reading preferences,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 42:52

which is I think part of why I was surprised by the fact that Michelle Huneven's Search didn't have a higher rating, because I felt like that was a book that if you read it and you fit if you've chosen it, and you know what it's about and you read it, and you know that you probably are going to have self selected as someone who's really going to like that. Yes, right now, the other end of the spectrum. I mean, I'm sure this is not the complete other end, but the just the ones that I found was that Twilight has over 6.3 million ratings, which is not that surprising, but it's been out since 2005. And it was a huge juggernaut. 3.64, which feels low to me,

**Kaytee Cobb** 43:35

I would agree. Except I think there's also a thing that happens on good reads, that is like revenge rating, revenge reading rating, revenge rating, Oh, God. And you might have a reader who was let's say, they're me. And in 2005, they were 21 years old. And they loved Twilight. And they were team who cares? Some Team Jacob or Edward, and they loved vampires. And they thought everything should be covered in sparkles. If they were vampire, Jason, and they traveled to Forks, Washington to check out Twilight, and the places that were part of this story. And now they are a 39 year old woman. And they they think that Twilight is twaddle. And they don't love it anymore. And so they go through and they say, you know, these books that I used to love, I'm a different reader now. And I want my Goodreads ratings to reflect who I am as a reader who I've grown into as a reader and so they will go back and like revenge rate, these books that they cared about at the time or they'll they'll pull up their rating and be like wow, I gave that five stars. It hasn't stuck with me or I have read better since then. Or I'm interested in other things now and and I do think that happens. So something with a really long lead like that. I think does have a ratings bumped down for that same reason, like people

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:56**

are interesting. I mean, I can't imagine someone taking the time. I am to go back into but I'm sure that it happens. But that leads me to the thought what I kind of thought you were going toward was the idea of hate reading. And so hate reviewing that element of things off Fourth Wing all up Twilight back in the day, that fills me with rage when people, there's some big hyped book. And people say, I know this book is not for me, and I'm gonna read it just to prove it. And then I'm gonna go rate it low. And I'm gonna go rant about it. And I'm going to rant about it on social media. It fills me with rage when people do this on Bookstagram. Like, well, I'll read something here. And I'm like, why did you even read it? I could have told you that you were going to hate that book. Why did you read it? And it's like, no, of course, we all try to break out of our comfort zone. And anyone can read any book that they want. But when you're doing it almost because you hope you're gonna hate a book. Because then you can go and, and just spew vitriol all over the people who loved it. That fills me with absolute rage. Now, let me tell you that the book this year that I read that I absolutely went in wanting to love and then ended up hating giving two stars. The Exchange from John Grisham currently has almost 17,000 ratings and an average review of 3.83. No, again, that's not a super high. That's not a high rating. I'm not saying that that is. But that is a star and a half higher than it should be. That I read, I couldn't even I read like three reviews. And I had to go away because I was like poppycock. I mean, these people I don't understand. It's like we didn't read the same. We didn't read the same book. But Kaytee, that's not the question you asked the question, or the question that was asked by the linen Fox was, Are there books that you really liked, they're rated really low. And again, I didn't find a whole lot of these for me, because I'm a basic B reader. But there were two that really stuck out for me Clean Air by Sarah Blake. This is the dystopian novel where like the murderous pollen, do remember this book, and then some someone start slashing the domes that keep them safe. That book was so good. It has an average rating of 3.3. And I just fundamentally disagree with that rating. I don't know if it's a mismatch of expectation, which I have a feeling is a large number of the low reviews period on Goodreads, right, and maybe you could say, is a huge reason that we don't like a book is when, you know, just fundamentally it doesn't match our expectations, but Clean Air that was recommended by Fiction Matters in her newsletter. I absolutely loved it gave it four and a half stars 3.3. It robs that book blind,

**Kaytee Cobb 47:44**

right? Yeah, I was able to find one as well. I went to look up J Ryan Stradal's books, and I expected to be very different from one of them, because I gave it a low rating. And I thought, everybody loves this book. And what I found instead was the most recent one that I read, which I gave five stars to but has a lot of really difficult content in it had a 3.6 on Goodreads, and I thought it was his best so far, followed only very shortly by the Lager Queen of Minnesota, which is the one that has the highest ratings for him on Goodreads. And again, 16,000 reviews, it came out about a year and a half ago. So that's about what I would expect. But I couldn't believe that it was rated so much lower than the five stars that I gave it. And it felt like well, I guess they're just wrong.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:30**

Or is it that mismatch of expectation where they're thinking and see the cover of that book? I can't remember the name of

**Kaytee Cobb** 48:37

Saturday Night at the Lakeside Supper Club, right? The lakeside?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 48:41

Right? That one, the cover the fact that of his previous books and the weight and the kinds of books that those were I felt like that was a book that was potentially going to be a big mismatch. And The Lager Queen of Minnesota, that one was one that gave people more and better of what they had already gotten from his previous books. Right. So this would be a really fascinating like doctoral dissertation. If somebody was doing like a, I don't even know what you'd be getting your doctorate in to do a dissertation on this. But it would be fascinating to like, look at Goodreads ratings, and really, really try to figure out what are the things that are dialing the knobs?

**Kaytee Cobb** 49:22

Yeah, okay, I have two more small ish things to add about this. One is that it's a documented fact at this point that bi-poc and LGBT authors are regularly getting reviews on books that aren't out yet and don't have galleys out yet because people disagree with the content of their books like and they'll get review bombed and now on Goodreads as of October 30 of this year Bunmi sent me a press release about Goodreads new policy to prevent review bombing, which is exactly what that is. A bunch of people haven't read this book. They go on they give it one star immediately because they think that it'll probably be garbage because Matthew Paul Turner is gay and also writes children's books, or because Ibram X Kendi writes about anti racism, and that's probably racist against white people like and it'll just be a review bomb of 11111 all the way down brings down the rating quite a bit. So that is important to take into account. If you're looking at any kind of marginalized identity on Goodreads, especially in early days. If it has a low rating, it's highly likely that those are trolls or bots, or whomever going and reading these books that differ from there. It's not even a mismatch of expectations. It's a mismatch of belief systems and centering of humanity or something. The other thing that I really wanted to point out is that Goodreads is still a public social networking site at its core. So it is possible to add friends and create a network on Goodreads. And then those people's reviews are pushed to the top of any book that you go look at. So I can go look at, let's say Saturday Night at the Lakeside Supper Club. And I can look at Mary's review, canvasses review and Katie's review. And I can decide from those three, if it's going to be a good fit for me, rather than saying, well, 16,000 people read it, hopefully, I'm one of those like and, and have a much more dialed in view of whether that book is going to be a good fit for me the same way that you would if you searched the hashtag on Instagram, and only looked for the people that have posted that you know, from that hashtag, because you have a feel for their reading taste. So it can be useful. But I think overall as a big conglomeration and collector of reviews from all corners of the internet, the bottom line is I never need to change my feels about a book based on what the internet thinks about it, and especially not the good reads internet owned and run by Amazon and Jeff Bezos, I just I don't need it. Absolutely fine.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 51:53



Now, just I'm just curious about this. Is there another metric or indicator that you would trust more? Well, there. So

**Kaytee Cobb** 52:01

the alternative the the main alternative to Goodreads is StoryGraph, StoryGraph is a much smaller business because it has only been around for 1/20 of the time, or 1/10 of the time that good reads has been around. So it's a lot more likely that you're not going to have as many reviews about a book over there as you would if you looked at this big, huge, like Mega Amazon owned beast of a website. Yeah. So I would much rather use my own feels my own like magic eight ball intuition about a book. Yeah. Then go to Goodreads and say, Well, does the internet think this is a good one? Okay. And I guess I can trust it. Like, for me,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 52:42

I have 10 1215 Different Instagram accounts that if I'm kind of questioning, I will go look and see if they've read it or even direct message them and be like, have you dipped into this? Or have you read this? What do you think about it? What potentially would you even think about it for me? I don't do a lot of that. But if I have to really be on the fence about something, usually this happens to me, not in mystery, suspense thriller, but more in literary fiction. And so like, I'll go to Liz Hein. And I'll say, What do you think about this for me? Or, you know, what, what were your thoughts about this, but just to get a sense, because usually that will be a better guide for me. Although, after this deep dive, I think that Goodreads ratings are actually a better indicator for me than I thought they were perfect for. Let me just say that I feel like I've learned that piece of things. Does that make sense?

**Kaytee Cobb** 53:32

Yeah. And I think it can be useful to look at the Goodreads information, even if you never log anything there. Even if you never share anything there. You can still pull it up and say, What does Goodreads think about this? Or what does story graph? Think about this? If you find that that has a better match for the metrics that matter to you? And it can be a good source of info to see if Yeah, this is probably going to be a win for you or probably not just like, what is it? Either IMDb or Rotten Tomatoes? or Netflix will say 98%? Sure you're gonna like this show. Based on what you've liked in the past. You can say, Okay, well, Netflix thinks I liked it. Usually they're right. Yeah, if Goodreads thinks I'm gonna like it, usually it's right, that's fine. Now,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 54:13

what I will say is there is a handful of books that are so a part of me at a cellular level that I will purposely not look at people's reviews of them or in amongst my bookish friends in person, I will even say, just so you know, on this particular book, I am accepting no criticism. So if you have it, take it elsewhere. Because I mean, again, this is not a lot of books. This is a small handful, but there are some, you know, I think we probably all have those sacred cows, right that we're like, I cannot accept criticism on this book. It will hurt my soul and might also damage my opinion of view. So I need for you not to say anything about it. So true. Right hold the sacred for me and I will hold those books sacred for you. So all right. Well, thank you at @theLinenFox for a great conversation starter. That was a really interesting deep dive and kind of look at a part of the reading world that I don't normally look at. So I love

**Kaytee Cobb** 55:10

it. Not as many as I thought it was gonna be. Right.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 55:14

All right. Kaytee let's make a visit to the fountain and make a wish. What is your bookish wish?

**Kaytee Cobb** 55:20

My bookish wish this week is actually a wish. Granted, I'm very excited to share about bookish-blends.com bookish dash blends.com Yes, a few weeks ago, I had a little hissy fit here at the end of the show, talking about book club stickers on the front of books that I love, especially because they personally are an affront to me as a reader, but just in general, that they're not removable, that we can't get rid of them somehow. And you Meredith mentioned, it would be a great business idea for somebody to create a sticker that could exactly cover that little read with Jenna book club seal, or the Reese's book, club seal, or whatever sticker is on the front of that book that's really marring a beautiful cover. So one of our bookish friends brought my fountain wish to her children. And one of her kids is a graphic designer. She has already just a couple weeks later now rolled out a website, where she is selling stickers that exactly cover the spot on a book that has a printed on Book Club sticker. Of course, it'll be in the show notes, but it's bookish dash blends.com. I've already ordered two I was the second order, which I was very upset about. I really wanted to be number one, for a book that I talked about today, Tom Lake, and a book that Meredith brought a couple of weeks ago Starling House. And I will be putting it right on my beautiful cover my beautiful hard covers of both of those books, in order to cover up that unsightly sticker and make it as pretty as it is in my mind.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 56:52

I love it. And it's funny, Kaytee because this was going to be my wish to this week, because I was so excited that that you got a Wish granted, you actually several of your wishes have been granted. And it's magical. It's absolutely magical. And I really just want to join you in giving so much support and just encouragement to bookish blends. What a fantastic and quick way to fill a hole in the market. I bought two I was ordered number five. And I bought one for Starling House and I bought one for the Mother Daughter Murder Club. I am so excited to get them when we do we'll do some videos. So you can see before and after and all of that. But we were you know, great minds think alike. Kaytee because it makes me so happy when people can figure out super quickly how to roll something out into the marketplace in a really smart way. The website's incredibly well designed, absolutely seamless shopping experience seamless print, there are so many websites that like can't take your freaking credit card easily

**Kaytee Cobb** 57:54

and quickly. Or you can put stuff in your cart and you can't figure out how to actually check out right.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 57:59

There's so many ways that people can screw this up bookish blends has done it absolutely beautifully. I can't wait to get those we will definitely show you guys. But you know, until then if you've bought Starling House, and you didn't like the sticker that was on it go support because lens because the only way we are going to have this available to us when other books come out is if we support them right now. So spend your eight \$10 If you can, if you have that available, this is a great way to do it because there are going to be a lot more books in the future that have those unsightly stickers on them.

**Kaytee Cobb** 58:32

Definitely I'm very excited about getting rid of them, getting them out of my eyesight. I've

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 58:38

seen splash okaying splash. Alright, 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** 58:49

And you can find me Kaytee at notes on bookmarks on Instagram full show

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 58:53

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

**Kaytee Cobb** 59:02

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

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 59:09

if you want more of this kind of content, you can become a bookish friend. It's just \$5 a month you get a ton of additional content and you keep this big show commercial free. You can also help us out by rating and reviewing us on Apple podcasts and shouting us out on social media. All of those things make a huge difference toward our finding our perfect audience. Yes,

**Kaytee Cobb** 59:30

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

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 59:36

next week, may your coffee be hot and

**Kaytee Cobb** 59:39

your book be unputdownable.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 59:40

Happy reading Kaytee

**Kaytee Cobb** 59:41  
happy reading Meredith