



Season 6, Episode 25: Knox and Jamie's Top 5 Reads of 2023

Mon, Jan 29, 2024 • 1:22:03

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 I'm about to have a stroke.

Kaytee Cobb 00:40

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in Arizona, and I will talk about books in the strangest of circumstances. This is episode number 25 of season six. And we are so glad you're here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:51

Oh, Kaytee, we are so glad that they are here because we are so glad that we are here. We are here with just people who I can't even believe that we're sitting that we're sitting here with I absolutely can't. We are welcoming today. The hosts of you guys know my favorite podcast ever The Popcast, Knox McCoy and Jamie Golden welcome this. Listen,

Jamie Golden 01:16

first of all, let's just start off all the bookish friends lower expectations. really set it real high. Yeah.

Knox McCoy 01:24

This is the bag of Hot Cheetos coming at you. You know what I mean?

Jamie Golden 01:28

This is the takis that has already been open and you found in the car and you're like, I do it. I do it. That's fine. I'm here as well, you know that?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:36

That is just absolutely not true. We are so excited to be talking to you guys. Because sure your favorite podcasters but also your fantastic readers. And so what we're going to be doing in this episode is we are going to be letting you guys cook. And we're going to be letting you guys have a platform to talk about your five top books of 2023. And I know a lot of people are going to be interested in that list.

Jamie Golden 02:01

I like being called a fantastic reader. My first grade teacher Miss Stanford put me in a big group, because she was like, You will not say Jane, right. Because I was like, What's the e for? I don't understand Dick and Janie, what's so hard? It said listen, this is feels like a therapeutic full circle moment. I'm going to tell my therapist about it. Yeah. And I

Knox McCoy 02:21

like to I have good taste? Debatable. We'll see. We'll find out. But I do I read well, you know, I can read words. Well, so I accept that compliment.

Jamie Golden 02:28

I read them fast. I read them thoroughly. Yep,

Kaytee Cobb 02:31

you even read words aloud? Well, Knox because I listened to your audiobooks at 3x speed, which of course, you sound very different now. But it was a great experience. Well,

Knox McCoy 02:41

a lot of takes involved. And I don't want to grind this to a halt. But you're listening at 3x I just want to confront you about that. That's insane. Oh my gosh,

Jamie Golden 02:49

is that all that your that your bookish friends talk about Patreon is that Kaytee's listening, because that's all we would talk about the entire time we were in there. Now

Kaytee Cobb 02:57

we have plenty of other things to talk about. Okay. There are so many books in the world. Right? It

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:01

is it is psychopathic, there's absolutely no question. Good. Okay. I'm

Jamie Golden 03:05

glad I just wanted to make sure we all knew it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:08

It's no, we've all accepted that about her. All right. So we are going to kind of run through normal show flow, but we are going to let them do their their ranked list of top five. So let's start out though the way we always do with our bookish moments of the week. Jamie, do you want to start out?

Jamie Golden 03:25

Listen, I have found the promised land. Because I am the laziest consumer of content, I don't want to get out from under my cover. I don't want to have to reach for anything. So I got a tiktok Turner ring months ago that I'm obsessed with and it doesn't make me a bad person. I just want to go on the record that actually swipes my tic TOCs for me so that I do not have to get out from under my cozy, but it would work on the Kindle app, but it would not work on my Kindle. And I was like I need to get into this lab as a sociology major. And I need to solve this. And I didn't have to because somebody had already done it and I got a Kindle Remote Control page turner clicker. And y'all listen, if you want to bookish moment, the fact that I just prop that thing up like with a Dr Pepper behind it. And I just click my little remote under my barefoot dreams blanket like a bachelor contestant, I have the best time. So that's my favorite bookish moment of this week because I got it this week. And I was like, Oh, I'm I'm going to die in this chair. Because I don't need to get up.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:32

They're gonna find your cold dead body, but you will have a smile on your face.

Jamie Golden 04:36

That's right. Thank you.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:37

That's all that matters. All right, perfect. That's that's a great one. All right, Knox. What is your bookish moment of the week? These days?

Knox McCoy 04:44

I'm doing a lot of reading a bedtime with my youngest Marlo and we've done like some of the Magic Treehouse books. You know, like we've hit going like right down the middle with some of the the book choices. But I was like Marlo, I'm gonna Are you okay? And I'm gonna read about the Trojan War. I'm gonna I'm gonna take you to Greek, the classics, okay? And it was like I found a book in a bookstore, it was like kind of made for kids. But as I began to read it, it was not really, because it really focused on the minutiae and the nitty gritty of like, the day to day life in Ithaca, when a Decius was gone. And I could tell wasn't vibing with Marlo, but then I turned the page. And it was illustrated a little bit of illustration. Now she's back in, she's like, that's what, that's what Odysseus looks like. That's what Penelope looks like. So I don't really have like, this hasn't happened yet, this innovation hasn't happened. But I do want to bring back to like adult books, like not weird books, but like, books for grownups, where you don't have to illustrate the whole thing. But just like drop a picture every, like 40 pages or something, you know, bring me back in. Let me see what we're talking about if my visualization is the same as your visualization, I know with AI, we've got like a lot of opportunity to just like have a computer vomit an idea out, and I know publishing that might get weird or difficult. But I was

just thankful to illustrations to capture Marlo's interest in Greek, ancient Greek society, because I don't think I was doing that.

Jamie Golden 06:10

I just picture you like Columbo. Yeah. And Kevin Arnold and the Princess Bride. Yeah. Which we just did. We did a deep dive of that on the podcast, and I just make sure you like sitting by the bed being like, now let's learn about muses.

Knox McCoy 06:25

Yeah. No, not muses. I see. I thought honestly, I thought we had a banger story because I was like, a Decius. He didn't want to go to the war. So we act like he's crazy. And he's like, plowing is filled with salt. But then they trick him into almost plowing over his son. And I was like, this is vivid. This is vivid imagery, but then I didn't put together the Father. So like father child, potential murder, and how that would resonate with her. So I have regrets. But I just the pictures saved. The illustration saved is what I'm saying. That's,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:52

I mean, there's a lot to unpack with the Trojan War as the nighttime story. Worth.

Knox McCoy 06:58

Yeah, right. Well, last story, I heard over 20 years of story, so it's gonna it's going to sustain for a while, you know, it's gonna

Kaytee Cobb 07:04

you're going full Odyssey. Yeah, yeah, that's right. Okay. I like it. Well, you

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:08

can't just the tip the Trojan War. I mean, you gotta, you gotta do it. full bore gonna do it. Right. Okay. All right. Kaytee, what is your bookish moment of the week? Okay,

Kaytee Cobb 07:18

yeah, my bookish moment. This week, I had the worst experience trying to change my cell phone provider. I never recommend that unless you hate your life. But I was there. I was trying to work with these two man children who are 18 years old. But we're not prepared to have a an adult conversation with me about, well, what do you do? And what does that mean? And I said, I'm a podcaster. And I talk about books. And they said, Well, what are you reading right now. And I was not prepared for the way that I was just going to gleefully ruin their lives. Because I got to talk to them about the book that I was reading as I walked around the store before I talked to them, which was Butcher and Blackbird by Brynne Weaver. So this is about a book about serial killers who are hot for each other, and torture their victims together and compete to kill the worst bad guy first, every August. And I was mentioning, you know, I've always been torn out eye sockets and like, we're just standing there at the AT and T desk. They weren't ready. They were the poor children, their faces. They were just not ready for this middle aged woman to tell them about like hot serial killer situations. It wasn't it was not okay with them. They were just shocked

Knox McCoy 08:25

like that. They're just staring at their the data upload progress at like 46%. And you're like, Yeah, I'm ripping out eyes it's hot. Yeah,

Jamie Golden 08:33

yeah. If you if you had been at mint mobile, they'd have been like, read it. Four stars. Well, both

Kaytee Cobb 08:39

of these people were like, well, I don't read. So. I'm interesting. So yeah, they're

Jamie Golden 08:45

like, We have gadgets. I don't know if you can look around. But we don't need to

Kaytee Cobb 08:49

read the newest smartphone. Did you want to hear about that? Two things

Knox McCoy 08:53

really quick. I like Jamie calls phones gadgets, like a very elderly old person. Amazing.

Jamie Golden 08:59

things not to eat. There's like, I pack Inspector

Knox McCoy 09:03

Gadget things. No, it makes sense. I was there ever a part of did you hesitate on recommending that book? Did you think about going back in time to be like more of a Normie book that they would like reasonable about?

Kaytee Cobb 09:15

Now they both said they they both had already told me that they don't read. Okay, so I was like, Well, what is the most ridiculous thing I could put in? And it was it was right there. It was easy pickins. That's

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:26

good. I can't believe you didn't take advantage of that moment to recommend a little tiny book called Unhinged.

Kaytee Cobb 09:33

It's a missed opportunity. I didn't want to be a sexual predator. So I wanted to avoid that whole storyline. It's a good instinct to follow.

Knox McCoy 09:42

Should we snake draft real quick? Would you rather be a sexual predator or serial killer? Yeah, it's tough. I mean, culturally, it does feel like serial killer.

Kaytee Cobb 09:51

Once you show up in prison, there's a high there's a hierarchy and I'd rather not be a sexual that's a good thing to think about.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:57

I mean, yeah, serial killer for me for sure. Oh, definitely. All right, my bookish moment of the week is it will surprise no one totally self serving. Because I had to find a way within this period of time that I have Knox in front of me as a captive audience. To talk about the fact here's how I decided to couch it. The January sleuth box for Fabled my independent bookstore, here in Arlington, Waco, I'm in Austin, they chose a book called Cold People by Tom Rob Smith, my second favorite book of 2023. And the book that I absolutely want to press into both of your hands, but like, Man, I think that this is one that would just be a sweet spot for KNOX McCoy. It is, and lots of people have been reading it and like DMing me and telling me how much that they're loving it. And they didn't expect to love it as much as they did. So here's the setup. It's really minimal. It's 2023. And all of a sudden, aliens make their presence known in the world all over the world. There is no fighting back. We know we done and they say you have 30 days humans to get to Antarctica, and whoever gets to Antarctica can live. But you got to live there. So it's about how does the world mobilized to get every human in 30 days to Antarctica? What would that be like? What does it look like to get humans to live on Antarctica? Right? There's just a couple of things there. And then what happens after 20 years, and maybe some gene mutation stuff has been being experimented with, who are the cold people? They're not aliens. Oh,

Knox McCoy 11:39

I assumed they had to be the aliens. But they're not they are not. Listen, I love this sounds incredible. I already just bought it on Audible to listen to, because you had me at aliens. And then when they're like, Hey, you got 30 days to get to the worst coldest place on earth. Go. It sounds a little bit Station Eleven-ish, you know, with the zooming forward, which I like.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 11:59

Yes, exactly. So what I said when I talked about on the show is it's Station Eleven If you which, which I liked. Definitely an excellent book, but it's Station Eleven If you wanted it to be more interesting. Okay.

Jamie Golden 12:13

Station Eleven to Emily St. John Mandel. Did you feel that?

Knox McCoy 12:18

I liked about that what she said, It's like Station Eleven, which I liked, which made me really know you didn't

Meredith Monday Schwartz 12:23

like likes, but if also there were monsters, so and also the cherry on top for all the listeners is that it is more than just plot plot, plot plot plot. I do like plot. But this book does a lot more than that in really, really giving a some very interesting things to think about. And it's done in a really elegant way. So that's Cold People by Tom Rob Smith. And I just It's my it's my press for this show.

Jamie Golden 12:52

I did just want to say I can tell you're not on cruise, tik tok because if you were you would know that the Drake Passage is tumultuous and I would not survive that part of the trip. So for those reasons, I am out.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 13:07

Yeah, I got to say, Jamie, there are a lot of reasons that I think you're going to be out in this scenario.

Jamie Golden 13:15

Listen, I'm the person as soon as it's on CNN on my I'll give it 24 hours, and then were dem pills. I what? I'll take all these gummies at once. I'm sure that will take care of business. You

Meredith Monday Schwartz 13:29

can die under your blanket with your Kindle. Yeah. And I'll be totally, I'll be

Jamie Golden 13:32

reading I'll be waiting a book. Yeah, it'll be Persuasion by Jane Austen. Nothing bad can happen to me.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 13:39

Exactly. All right, good. So those are our bookish moments of the week. We're gonna do a quick round robin of current reads probably a little faster than normal than Kaytee and I normally do our current reads because we want to get you guys into the meat of the show, which is Knox and Jamie's Top Five Books of 2023. So Jamie will go back to you. What are you currently reading or what did you just finish?

Jamie Golden 14:00

Okay, I've just finished and it comes out I think this week when this episode goes live, and it is Everyone on This Train is A Suspect by Benjamin Stevenson. Listen, I ride hard for Benjamin Stevenson, I greenlit his Everyone in My Family Has Killed Someone which is now being adapted into an HBO limited series, which I'm very excited about. I love his writing. This is a continuation of the character Ernest Cunningham, who now has written this book. And now he has been invited to a writers convention and he is going to be serving on a panel at this crime writing festival with other authors a debut writer, that's him. Forensic science writer, Blockbuster legal thriller literary and a psychological suspense. And in the course they're all in this event happens on a train. I love a closed situation. I love a cruise ship. You're gonna get murdered there. You're gonna get murdered in an escape room. And wherever I love a murder where you can't get away, and that is exactly what happens, one of the authors ends up dead. Now, what's interesting is are these other authors suspects? Or are they the investigators who will solve the crime? Because they can do both right? And what I love about Benjamin Stevenson, who himself is a stand up comedian who became an author, it's all throughout his writing. If you've ever read his other books, then you know, he likes to talk to the reader in the middle of the book and say, Hey, by the way, I am a reliable narrator Narrator so don't worry about it. Like I'm not gonna, I'm not gonna steer you wrong. And I love that I just love the Winx too. He especially in this book, he takes some shots publishing, which you're going to hear in my top five, I love people taking shots at publishing. And so I would normally not like a repeat protagonist that generally stay away from

those novels, because I find that I will get, I'll stop reading other things. I'll only want to read everything that this particular protagonist is in. But what has changed me and that is the TV show *Slow Horses*, which is based on the book series by Mick Herron and Knox and I both we love *Slow Horses* on Apple Plus TV. It's a fantastic series. Each season of that series is based on one of the books that Mick Herron wrote, and I've loved kind of going along with Jackson Lamb. And so being with Ernest Cunningham feels the same way. So I love this but love

Meredith Monday Schwartz 14:15

his voice. I mean, as a narrator, he is just very singular. And I heard that the rules from the first book appear again in this book, right do they do it's magical? Yeah. I love love. Love that one. Alright, Knox, what are you currently are just reading.

Knox McCoy 16:46

So it's a book called *Chain Gang All Stars*. It's by a hope I'm gonna get this name, right. Nona, Kwame Adjei-Brenyah. So this is it's the story of centrally like two main characters Loretta, Thurwar and Hurricane Stax. And they're the stars of a show called *Chain Gang All Stars* that shows the cornerstone of something called the criminal action penal entertainment kind of channel. And it's essentially a super popular but super controversial profit raising program in America's private prison industry. So very, very complicated, very unknown, nuanced ethics going on there. But essentially, it's a modern, well, I guess it's more of a futuristic kind of return to the gladiator format, where you have prisons who are guilty of very violent, brutal crimes. And if they can stay alive in advance or last a certain amount, I think it's three years, they get their freedom, no questions asked. But it's a little more complicated than that, as you find on the story, I like it. I'm listening to it. And I like it. Because it's a ton of super talented voice acting, we get a lot of perspective shifts. And I think it's beyond just talking like a really interesting story between characters. It's also really interesting consideration of like, how we let the state or the government or the man or whatever, like commoditize us, because they do some really interesting, I don't know, not even like rabbit trails, but like, they talk about all these things that are sponsored, and how this weapon in the arena that just like decapitated a prisoner is like trademarked property, you can get it the local Home Depot or whatever. So it's really kind of dark, but clever in how it goes about it. But I'm absolutely loving this book so far. That

Kaytee Cobb 18:31

was on my top 10 of 2023 Knox, I loved that book. Also, I thought it was so cleverly done, even though it's really dark. And there's lots of there's decapitation. There's like stabbing with a corkscrew in the very first scene. Yes. And like the tattoos, where everybody has like brand names tattooed on their bodies, because that helps them get more points so they can buy more weapons. Like everything about it, I thought was so smart. And interesting. I couldn't put it down. I loved that

Knox McCoy 18:58

book. Yeah, it's one of those things where it's like, it doesn't feel believable. But with just a couple things. It's super believable all of a sudden, which is sad, but also very relevant, you know? Yeah,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 19:07

he did a great, great job with that really uncomfortable reading experience. But I think that was exactly the point. Yeah,

Knox McCoy 19:13

absolutely.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 19:14

Definitely. All right, Kaytee, what are you currently reading?

Kaytee Cobb 19:17

Okay, my current read this week is Warcross by Marie Lu. So this book has been on my TBR. I went to look it up. It came out in 2017. And I think Anne Bogel put it on my TBR. Shortly thereafter, probably in a Kindle daily deal, although it could have been on What Should I Read Next. And I decided to dive into it randomly this week. And then I just blasted through it and I couldn't wait to talk about it. So here's the setup. And Mica Chen is our main character. She's living like on the edge of losing everything. She's already been kicked out of school a few years back for the way she hacked into the administration system. And since then, she's developed a bounty hunting business that allows her to survive, but just barely. When we meet her. She's about to nab a high profile criminal with a huge bounty but the reward is scooped out from underneath her by another hunter. She goes home and finds an eviction notice on her front door. All of this leads her to the terrible decision to use her hacking skills on a digital game that's televised worldwide. Warcross. It's a bit of Ender's Game a bit of Slay by Brittney Morris and a bit of Ready Player One because it's this huge virtual world with a big like community built inside of it. So she grabs another player's resource, but that accidentally causes her to glitch into the game, which means everybody now knows who she is. It catches the eye of the billionaire founder whose name is Hideo Tanaka, and he recruits her to the game as a wildcard player with an offer to find a player called zero and walk away with more money than she's ever dreamed of. So she has to play the game, but she could have billions of dollars at the end and mica is flown to Tokyo by private jet in a fish out of water story, she gets to see a life that she's never even imagined with clothing and food and accommodations that can pay off her debt in a single bite kind of thing. What follows is a high stakes game of cat and mouse with this zero and a mica, there's a game at the center. The world is built around this amazing tech that feels like it's right at the brink of our current world. In fact, Hideo Tanaka, that founder that I mentioned, even mentions a quote along the lines of everything started at science fiction until somebody made it science fact it's those gadgets that Jamie was talking about. That that's exactly, exactly so it feels like you're inside the Warcraft games as an observer. And you're also getting to see it played in front of you. When I hadn't even finished I had already pushed it into the hands of a few readers. I love that really love new near future sci fi. And I'm super excited to get into Book Two, which I'm grateful that it's only a duology. So I can totally handle a series. That's only two books. Thank you. Yes, amen. That one's called Wildcard but this one is Warcross by Marie Lu.

Jamie Golden 19:18

Listen, I knew it was only two books, because I just borrowed both from the library. Thank you, Libby. Listen, you were talking about that. And I was like, Oh, she's probably hot. There's probably somebody else that's hot. And then there

Kaytee Cobb 22:05

is some tension happened here.

Jamie Golden 22:07

You know, I love it. This it future tension. So

Knox McCoy 22:11

I'm in and I just want to say let's normalize. Would you say do ology, so it's called do ologies? Yeah, sounds your new trilogy, just two that's fine.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 22:20

And we're seeing more of that I really think that we are going I think that that's going to become something that's much more common than it has been? I hope so. I hope so. All right. Well, my current read is a book that I ended up really, really loving. That's called The Future by Naomi Alderman, I'm not going to give you a ton of setup, because this is the kind of book where you really kind of just want to be dropped in as blind as possible. But here's the setup. Our story starts out we meet three billionaires, and they are getting coded texts on their phones. And as soon as they read them, they get up from what they're doing. And they start to pack. They make calls. They board private jets, because they know something that we do not that the world is about to end and they need to hightail it to safety at their end world glares, which you knew they have, and elsewhere. So in another part of our story in a mall in Singapore, Lijun and internet famous survivalist flees from an assassin, she's cornered, desperate. And worst of all, she might die without knowing why this person is trying to kill her. And then suddenly, a remarkable piece of software appears on her phone and tells her exactly what she needs to do to escape. So the question is, who made the software? And why is it saving her these characters and more come together to give us a terrifying picture of the future. So Naomi Alderman, of course, is the author of the book, The Power, which came out a few years ago, and it was the beginning of what I think of as the the new feminist rage novels that we've seen a lot of over the course of the last few years. And as I was reading this book, I do have to say I had conflicting feelings. I had kind of a hard time getting into the first third of the book, but I kept feeling very sure that I wanted to continue to be on the ride. It's kind of one of those slow burns, you kind of gotta let it you got to let it develop. But I'm really glad that I listened to that because I ended up liking this book a lot. I think the overwhelming feeling that I have is that the future is not necessarily a friendly book. It's not setting out to make you feel good about really anything. Human nature, social media, capitalism, climate disaster. None of this is happy and the book is delighted in making sure you know that there is not a lot of good under the sun, but the character development is fantastic. And I ended up being interested in that and what the future was going to look like if Alderman could actually land to the plane that she was flying. It felt to me overall, like Naomi Alderman really wants a literary career that is like Iron Rand and Margaret Atwood combined. In fact, we learned, we learned in the afterwards that Naomi Alderman has been mentored for years now by Margaret Atwood. And I think you can really see that in her choice of subjects. And in the way that she writes, she sort of terrifying, but also does a lot more showing than telling. She's very, very smart that way. Naomi Alderman is not interested in whether or not you have a good time reading her books, she's not even necessarily interested, if you completely understand what's in her book. She has an idea of where she wants to go. And if you're on the train when it leaves the station, great. But if

you're not, and maybe you weren't ready for it, I don't read enough books like that. And I felt kind of fizzy and interested as I got to the back half of the book, which is, the back half is really, really well done. And that's where the plotline comes together beautifully hand moves really quickly, must have maybe read the last half in less than two hours. Also, it provides some semblance of hope for humanity's future, I do want to mention that. Overall, I'm giving this book a solid 4.5 stars. I'm really glad I read it. And Naomi Alderman remains an auto buy author for me, this is The Future by Naomi Alderman,

Knox McCoy 26:27

like, ask the question you said like you struggle with like the first little bit, but you stuck with it. When that happens? What is it that keeps you is it premise? Is it character? Is it dialogue? Like is or is there just like a I have a weird completionist fixation and I just have to finish this book.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 26:46

Yeah, I don't have a completionist fixation, because it's super important to me to read a lot of books that I really, really enjoy. So I'm I'm fine with DNF in the book, and I thought about this after this book knocks because I think what it comes down to for me is whether or not I trust this particular author to take me to a place that's going to make me glad I spent the time and in this case, I mean, sometimes you can tell the writing, sometimes it's premise, sometimes it's a mixture of those things. I felt really sure that Naomi Alderman had had a plan for these people. I think part of what was difficult was because in the first little bit, you're kind of rotating perspectives and kind of like the beginning of you know, some of the higher end prestige television where you're getting kind of you're getting a lot of information, but you don't know exactly how it's going to connect. And you kind of just have to trust that it's going to come together. Maybe not in the first episode. But eventually it's come together. And that's how I felt about this book. I was never bored. It was just a little bit like what is happening but then when it but then the payoff is big.

Knox McCoy 27:50

That's I don't know if y'all read The Anomaly. I did. Yes. But same vibe for me. I was like, Man this weird. I don't really know what's happening. But I'm gonna stick with it because it feels cool. So and I'm glad I did you know? Yes.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:01

All right. So those are our current reads. which now means we can get to what we are all here for, which is to give you guys the ability to talk about your five favorite books of the year. How difficult I want to know first of all, Jamie for you. How difficult was it for you to come up with the list? Oh,

Jamie Golden 28:21

it was so dumb. It was so hard. Like I was like you need to get it together.

Kaytee Cobb 28:26

This is not a big gnashing of teeth is what we talked about there.

Jamie Golden 28:29

But here's, you know why it was 2023 was maybe my best reading year ever. Like ever. I read so many books that I love. It was hard to leave off Divine Rivals but I knew because Kaytee talked about it. R Eric Thomas's book this year, magical she talked about it in your top 10 I loved Fragile Threads of Power by VE Schwab. Like those are books that I would have included in my list, but it was difficult, like the Heaven and Earth Grocery Store. Like I just loved so many books this year. So it was for me hard

Meredith Monday Schwartz 29:01

Knox Was it difficult for you? Yes.

Knox McCoy 29:03

Because they're all my favorite. And I think they're all great and wonderful. Like your children. Yeah, a little bit. Honestly.

Jamie Golden 29:09

No, he has a favorite child you all have children absolutely do

Knox McCoy 29:13

not probably mean it's my second dog is better than everybody. It's actually my wife, second dog, skip a bunch. And then the kids are all they're tied

Kaytee Cobb 29:24

tied for seven. All

Meredith Monday Schwartz 29:25

right, well, choosing books, choosing your banking books is definitely at least easier than that. So Jamie, let's start with you. We're gonna go from five to one we're gonna go back and forth between the two of you. So in your number five spot, what did you have?

Jamie Golden 29:37

My choice was The Road of Bones by Demi Winters. This book came to me because of a lawyer on Tik Tok called Reb, who is not a book talker. She actually just talks about pop culture and does commentary on what's happening in the world. And then she was like, PS, I read this book, and I have died because it was so good and it has murdered me. And I was like, Okay, well I'm that's that's Strong review. It's not detailed in any way, but I will read it. And this is a romance to see which is, I mean, I don't want to be cliché, but I am down with romance to see as a genre. I love it deeply. This story is about it features Scylla Scylla is on the run. She is being hunted by Queen, an assassin is after her, she has to make it down the road of bones, which is 1000 mile stretch that has darkness and a warrior's and maybe a mysterious murderer. And she's got to make it to a place called COPPA where she can be in a safe house, okay. And in the course of this, she is not doing well. She's not thriving. And so she's like, You know what, here's a wagon. I'm gonna get in it. And we'll see where this wagon goes. Well the wagon is full of Vikings. It belongs to a Viking warrior crew who are very hot. Yeah, they are. And there is tension. But what I love about this book is that there's twists and turns. This is Demi's. I keep calling her I want to I want her to be either Demi Moore or Demi Lovato and I'm sure she's like it's Demi. It's so

Demi Winters, the writer, this is her debut novel and the world building is excellent. Normally, I'm not a fan of the multi POV because I'm like, no, no, go back to who I know. But no, this is executed beautifully. And the found family I love a found family trope and I think a lot of people in the world have to find their family and the people who love them deeply and you will love this book if that is you. No offense to Chuck and Jan my parents who are lovely, but found family is a delight.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 31:36

This is completely new to me, Jamie I have never heard of Kaytee you haven't heard of this either. And triple bonus it is available on Kindle Unlimited. So

Jamie Golden 31:48

yes, bonus. Yes. And second book. Doology How you doin? Look at this out in February. So but it doesn't end on a cliffhanger. So you're not gonna be like, oh my god gambling on the way. There's not like a huge cliffhanger. It's just more like, Well, I wonder what they'll get up to next. That's where we end.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 32:07

Perfect. Well, that sounds really really good. Definitely. I love romanticism. Okay, Knox. What's your number five,

Knox McCoy 32:13

my number five. And this is I didn't mean this to be ancient Greece heavy. But it is and that's okay. We're just going to roll with it. It is Clytemnestra by Costanza Casati. I my

Meredith Monday Schwartz 32:27

number one of 2023

Knox McCoy 32:30

Is that right? Look, man this book was so I kind of felt bad ranking it lower because it was such an experience. Erin actually Erin Moon she knew I'd read Madeline Miller Song of Achilles and loved it. I just like Rome, like Greek pretty basic b word man, you know, so I like smoking meat like whatever. Like it's kind of what you think it is. But I hadn't heard about Clytemnestra knew the myth of her knew the story and the way that Costanza Casati weaves her into the story of Helen Troy, the story of the battle the story of Odysseus, she's not just like a passenger. She's the main character, and they give her so much emotional depth and layers. And the way she articulates the scene in the setting is so vivid. I absolutely love this. I recommend this to anyone who even mentioned something about Greek mythology. It was an absolute blast to get through this year. Yeah,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 33:22

incredible. I mean, my number one book of the year, I was desperately affected by that book. I thought it was so beautifully done. I thought the character of kind of Clytemnestra I felt like I lived three lives with her. Yeah. And it's so memorable. I read it, probably March of this year, and I feel like I can remember just so much of it compared to what I normally remember. Really well done. Did

Knox McCoy 33:43

you visualize like, do you visualize people like when you're alright, I had Claire from Outlander, though I was like, that's Clytemnestra. There's no reason that's just who my brain went to immediately. Yeah, maybe I'll under skin more bloody is what I'm thinking, you know, more bloody. Yeah.

Kaytee Cobb 34:00

Right. Because people are saying that. There's not enough of that. Outlander. All right.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:07

Good. One, good one. All right, Jamie. Number four.

Jamie Golden 34:10

Okay, my number four is a memoir. It's my only nonfiction on the list. However, I loved a lot of nonfiction I read this year, but this is All My Knotted Up Life by Beth Moore. Now, that's more if you don't know she is a prolific Bible study teacher in the modern day, probably one of the most prolific, she has sold 17 million copies of her Bible studies. That's fine. That's fine. She can settle. That's why she lives in a house that was a church that has stained glass windows. Anyway, I was interested in her memoir, because in 2016, she famously left the Southern Baptist Church, the denomination that she was a part of, in the Protestant church and it was very messy and very ugly. And I followed her on Twitter and she's a fun Twitter hang. Like, I don't call it x. So don't even ask me to do that. She's a fun Twitter hang and I was like I want to know the secrets because you could tell you know, there's some people who are like when we have like a celebrity if we get a memoir from them or like, awaken be good, because they've never told us anything like one day and 25 years when we get Taylor Swift's memoir, I am going to be lined up in front of whatever Antarctic bookstore that I can be get it again, that book, I'm going to be very excited. But this book is what I love about it is and a trigger warning, there is sexual abuse in this book, she experienced that as a child, it absolutely framed up so much of her life, as it often does. And she decided in the 90s, she was like, Oh, I could become a Bible teacher. And she did. But here's the thing, what I love about it has politics as a part of it, because that's one of the reasons she kind of got excommunicated from the church. But for me, Beth Moore was such a part of my growing up as a I'm a recovering Legalist and a recovering evangelical. And this book is so well written, it has a great sense of humor. It's fantastic on audiobook and I just to hear her tell her stories. And it's I think you don't have to have a faith background at all, to appreciate the complexity of just being a person in the world. I'm a firm believer that everybody has a story. And if they had the right writer, if it's not them, if they had the right writer, it would be a best seller because everybody has an interesting story. And hers is really unique and I loved it. I

Knox McCoy 36:25

just don't think everybody has an interesting story out there. You don't don't

Jamie Golden 36:29

jump on people like that. Everybody has a story now you

Knox McCoy 36:33

know who you are and that's okay. You don't have to be interesting. That's okay. You know, my 20s were not interesting. They were sad and depressing. And no one should have interesting things happen to you. Not really not worth the book. I'll tell you that.

Kaytee Cobb 36:48

You've literally written two books.

Knox McCoy 36:50

Not about that period, because no one cared. But

Kaytee Cobb 36:53

I call those messy middle memoirs knocks like Beth is older than us. Yeah. So she she's out of the messy middle. Yep. But like No 20 year old should be writing a memoir about like, their time at the 18 T sales counter. That's not we don't need that from you.

Knox McCoy 37:09

It was like it was 20 Whatever. 12 and I had Pizza Hut three times a week for an entire calendar year. Is that a good book? I don't know.

Jamie Golden 37:17

Pizza Hut. Wildly underrated. Why are y'all even better places? Pizza Hut. So good. Yep.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:22

I love me some Pizza Hut. That is true. All right, Knox your number four. I'm

Knox McCoy 37:29

glad Jamie went into nonfiction because I started sweating. I was like, Are we allowed to do nonfiction Is that is that allowed here? So I'm glad she paved the way this might have been like one of my favorite nonfiction is like over the last few years. It's The Fish that Ate the Whale. And it's the true story of Sam Zemurray. Who was a self made immigrant mogul of the banana industry that I'm everyone's familiar with the banana industry. But he was Chiquita. Yeah, that's right. That's right. He was he was Chiquita before Chiquita, bro. Okay, like he made Chiquita basically be even a thing. They called him the banana king. He's responsible for a lot of New Orleans. He's responsible for a lot of Tulane. Like he donated a ton of money. He was so cunning, so powerful. He even he so while he's running a banana empire, he also on the side organize the South American coup in the White House was like, Hey, we know you're doing this don't. And he was like, Cool, cool, I won't. And then he went ahead and did it anyway. And the White House was like, what are you gonna do? That's Sam, that same Zemurray the banana king of New Orleans, it's the most interesting story. It's a little not rise and fall. But it's the complicated aspects of someone who makes a lot of money, and the ethics of how they go about making that money and who it affects. And then, weirdly, when that happens, I feel like you don't usually get the range of that person being like, oh, man, I should try to figure out how to fix that. But that's actually what happens with Samsung, right? He's like, I did the thing unknowingly, kind of knowingly, but unknowingly of the ramifications. I want to do some good things to help fix that now. Um, so it's just a really interesting

story. I could see this being a movie. I don't think it's there's a plan, Sue, but just a fascinating story of a real life person.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:08

That sounds excellent. And also, I am really impressed how many times you properly said the word banana. Oh, okay.

Knox McCoy 39:15

Yeah, well, I don't know. I don't know if your audience is like, ready for the banana revolution. So I just want to be sensitive to that. You know, we

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:22

only say banana in our house. I've taught my grandsons. My grandsons will only ever hear it that way. They think everyone else is wrong when they say banana.

Knox McCoy 39:33

So exactly. Yeah, exactly.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:35

Thank you, the better, more efficient pronunciation. No, I love it.

Kaytee Cobb 39:40

Meredith, that sounds like such a you book like that, that business biography rise and fall. Like I think that sounds perfect for you. Well,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:47

it does. And it sounds a lot like The Monk of Mokha by Dave Eggers that is similar in that it follows an immigrant who in the coffee industry, and kind of he comes to San Francisco and hurts this coffee empire and it's super, super fascinating. All right, Jamie, what about you coming in Hot at number three.

Jamie Golden 40:06

Number three. Listen, I It's the best part of this is the author's name is not a name. It's isthisselfcare, because my number three book is Draco Malfoy and the Mortifying Ordeal of Being in Love, it is fanfiction. And listen. Normally I wouldn't do this, but I freaking love this book. So like I think about this book all the time. I'm actually mad that I read it. So now that I can't read it for the first time again. I'm like, so upset with myself. This book was this book was given to me from a Instagram person that I follow who was like, I don't know if y'all are into Dramione. So Draco and Hermione fanfic. And I was like, Oh, I don't know that I Am that I Am I because I've read a lot of Star Wars fanfiction, and have always loved it. But it never occurred to me, because I've never read the Harry Potter books. I know. I know. But I've seen all the movies. And so I was like, Oh, I'm gonna read it. Yes. Fantastic. So this was romance. Look, there is no darkness, really, and this, but it's so grounded. The characters feel so accurate to who they are in the original text. So the Canon has followed, but it's just them older, and she is now working as a medical researcher and healer. And she's on the cusp of a huge discovery that will impact all of the worlds but people know she's on the cusp and they want to stop her the bad people

want to stop her. And so Draco is an aurer who is assigned to protect her from forces unknown forced proximity might be my favorite trope in romance of all time. I love it other than enemies to lovers, which this also is this book is fantastic. Aaron who not to mention who works at our company. She is a huge Harry Potter fan. And she finally read it literally the day before we're recording this and this is the text she sent me. She was like, I do not need this hobby in my life. At this time. I stayed up until 3am reading this book because guys, it's 200,000 words. Like this is no joke. What? It's 200,000 words.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 42:08

It's fanfiction. So did you get it on your Kindle? Like I've read? Yes.

Jamie Golden 42:13

So if you go to our archive of our own, and fanfictiondotnet both of those are the probably the most popular fanfiction sites. You can download it as a PDF or an EPUB. Any you can put it on your Kindle. So you can read it just like a regular and it's free, free dollars free dollars. Because you can't charge for IP that you don't own. Right. Okay. But she also said, obviously, the spicy bits are great, and they are great, you guys. They are very open door and all the things. But she said but the plot is actually stellar. And I just really don't ever want to read another man not written by a woman because the way that Draco is written is magical, no pun intended. So it was truly like I was stunned how much I loved it. And then I so many people had recommended other Harry Potter fanfiction. And y'all it was everybody kept recommended me the saddest, most trauma induced. And I was like, hey, hey, I want time traveling Dramione. I want Dramione on a boat, and there's a murder, but it's like a soft murder. Like, I don't want any happiness. So that's my number three.

Knox McCoy 43:22

See, I would read Sirius in his 20s That would be an interesting.

Kaytee Cobb 43:27

I've got that for you Knox. It's called All the Young Dudes. It's about the marauders when they're at Hogwarts and then going into young adulthood. It is also over 100,000 words. It's so good. It's so good. This is

Knox McCoy 43:42

this is fantastic. I'm writing down so many book recommendations that like that is the

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:47

goal. Well, yes, that sounds excellent. Jamie give us the title one more time.

Jamie Golden 43:53

It's Draco Malfoy and the Mortifying Ordeal of Being in Love

Kaytee Cobb 43:57

and who's the author? Do you know that? Or? No,

Jamie Golden 44:00

because they don't have a name.

Kaytee Cobb 44:02

I mean, the the username. Oh,

Jamie Golden 44:04

istheselfcare.

Kaytee Cobb 44:05

Is this self care? Okay. Yeah, cool.

Knox McCoy 44:08

Look, that's probably my favorite part about the non traditional publishing development is these names getting wild all the young dudes, whatever. I still don't understand what Jamie said about the title. But it's like because if that was traditional publishing, it'd be the stupid his title. It'd be unremarkable and ridiculous. Oh, yeah. But I like that. Yep. Yeah, the

Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:26

the house at the end of the girl or something completely out, right. We can't remember. All right, next, what's your number three,

Knox McCoy 44:36

my number three another nonfiction. Last one promise. I found this so interesting and informative. And clarifying. It is Traffic by Ben Smith, Ben Smith, who wrote for The New York Times think he's the co founder of semaphore, the news organization, but he uses this book to essentially tell the story of why social media is so broken now. And I think sometimes you read a book like that If it's like, okay, I get the agenda, I get the deal like, so it's always just like gonna be a dunk fest. It's really not. It's like, this started out as a really cool thing. And then it evolved in a natural way, but in a almost dystopian way. And here's why. And he uses the rise and fall of BuzzFeed and Jonah Peretti, to kind of clarify and carry us through. It's not essentially it's not exactly a narrative, but it is a bit of a ongoing story. And Jonah Peretti is kind of the avatar for who carries the story beats for us. But I found if you're at all interested in the internet, internet culture, social media, anything like that, why the internet is how we have it today. Read this book, and it will bring it together so simply, but also so profoundly, in not always the best way.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 45:49

It sounds really, really good. Sounds

Kaytee Cobb 45:51

interesting. It sounds more interesting than like traffic jams, which is what I was hoping you were going to be talking about. Okay,

Knox McCoy 45:56

now that is to be read. I do have to Yes, spoiler it is.

Jamie Golden 46:02

Spoiler.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:04

All right, Jamie, what is number two for you?

Jamie Golden 46:07

Okay, my number two, listen, I know that sometimes best sellers were like a we get it. Everybody loves love spot. But listen, sometimes you love a book, and it's about seller because it's about sometimes Rihanna is amazing, because she's Rihanna. And that's why we listen to her music. Do you know what I mean? Yep. So this is Drowning by TJ Newman. I freaking loved this book, TJ Newman, who has only two books, both of which have been iconic. I've greenlit both of them. Her first book Falling. She was a flight attendant became an author, and now writes about plane crashes. That's my favorite thing is she's like, Oh, I know how this happened. Right? What you know, tell you know, yeah, exactly. And so she is telling the story. And this one, a six minutes after takeoff, a plane goes into the Pacific Ocean. Guys, don't be on those Coast airports. You gotta you gotta say inland. You're not I mean, and it crashes in the Pacific Ocean. And they're evacuating quickly. But before they can evacuate, there's an explosion. And they have to close the doors, and it sinks to the bottom of the sea. And there are 12 people still alive inside this plane. And time is ticking. And so inside this plane is a father will and His 10 year old daughter, 11 year old daughter. What? Yeah, yes. And what is crazy as the only people who can save them on the surface, they brought in truly a professional diver who's at the top of their class. And what do you know, it's that little girl's mother. And that man's soon to be ex wife already in divorce proceedings. So can we save? Can we save people? And can we save a family? No. Can we maybe I don't know. Let's say I love this book. I read this so fast. Because it just moves from page one. You're not slowing down. Nobody cares about character development in the book. Who cares? Who cares? We are about action. And fun playing flat facts, which are if you're playing crashes, us probably going down. So it was fantastic. And I loved it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:04

I loved it. So so good. I absolutely love TJ Newman's books. And people always say like, oh, you know, but aren't you afraid you're free to read them to make you free to fly? reading her books has made me more confident in flying than before I read them learning everything that you that you learn about it. Yes, Drowning is so good. And I feel like up a notch even from Falling as far as great. There was some story there. That was very, very well done.

Jamie Golden 48:32

It was excellent. It has it ends, if you're looking for a good ending. It's got a solid, gorgeous ending other than the people who died bad for them sad for them.

Kaytee Cobb 48:41

I just bought that one this week because it was 50% off at Barnes and Noble. Yes, it's on my shelf. It's waiting. Alright,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:47

Knox, what's your number two?

Knox McCoy 48:49

My number two is in this isn't because like it's the coolest chilliest vibe. But I just found the writing and the story and the character to be so overwhelmingly good and transfixing. And that is *Demon Copperhead*. This is Southern Fried Charles Dickens, basically, what you don't get I feel like when people write about the sides, and as a native to the south, I'm very sensitive to Southern accents. I'm very sensitive to story set in the south. And I'm looking for reasons people screw it up. There were no screw ups here. This was so well done. The sense of place was so completely defined. And I think in a lot of ways, it gave voice and story real estate to a real version of the South. That isn't cliché, low hanging fruit, hillbillies, incest, et cetera. But it was like the reality of the opioid epidemic and how that affects people how that happens, how people are trying to help each other, but also they can't even help themselves. I found some of the character work to be so compelling, so interesting. And again, it's not the most uplifting story, but I think it is almost like a tour de force of just writing of just Southern colloquialisms, I absolutely blew through this book, even though it was a little longer than the ones I usually read. But it was it was so good. I just couldn't put it down. Did

Meredith Monday Schwartz 50:08

you do this one on audio?

Knox McCoy 50:10

I did? I did.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 50:11

Okay. And do you do most of your reading on audio? How much like what's your breakdown?

Knox McCoy 50:16

Man? It used to be like 20% audio 80%. The older my kids have gotten that percentage has shifted. And so now it's probably at 20 the other way. Okay,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 50:27

that's more like, yeah, Kaytee reads a ton on audio. Yeah,

Jamie Golden 50:31

well, you can read a ton when you get 3x.

Kaytee Cobb 50:37

Mine is 60/40. For words, sure. Audio Sure.

Jamie Golden 50:40

How bad are you when you have to slow down to read letters on a page? Or, you know, I

Kaytee Cobb 50:46

love it. My goal every year is to read more in print than I have been reading an audio because I like sitting down and reading aloud, or reading aloud. I like reading aloud. And I like reading to myself. I like

Knox McCoy 50:57

it as well. The unintended consequence of I don't listen to three i Listen. 1.7 and my kids make fun of me and quick. When they hear come on in the car. Like autoplay. They're like, what, why is this person on meth and what what is happening? But I feel like I've gotten so impatient with people during meetings who were like, you know, I

Jamie Golden 51:17

pointed at me.

Knox McCoy 51:19

I just want to grab them and be like, say what you're trying to say? Because I'm used to listening to people talk very fast.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 51:26

Oh, yeah, yeah. All right, Demon Copperhead. Very, very good. One, one that is on my TBR. For this. I've been saving it because I felt like so many people were reading it and there just wasn't a need for me to kind of jump on the bandwagon at that time. But I've been saving it for I'm thinking this summer. It feels like a summer. Yeah,

Knox McCoy 51:46

I think that's true.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 51:46

Does that feel good? Okay, yeah, for sure that that one is on all kinds of lists. All right, Jamie, it is time for your number one book of 2023. Are you ready?

Jamie Golden 51:57

I am ready. Within and this book is I have learned it's quite divisive. And I don't know what's wrong with the rest of y'all. So my number one book is Yellowface by R F Kuang. Yellowface. I loved this book. So for those who don't know, this is about a author who has just gotten a movie deal for her book, and she's having a party to celebrate. And at this party, she chokes and die. That happens quick. So that's not a spoiler. she chokes and dies. And then there's happens to be at this party, a struggling writer who cannot seem to sell any ideas. And that person sneaks into Athena, Athena is the author Athena blue. And it's matters that Athena Lu is Chinese American. So this white lady named June, sneaks into her office and steals a partial manuscript off her desk and takes it and makes it her own, gets a six figure deal becomes a New York Times bestseller. And it's all very controversial, because there are people questioning, because she takes the story, which is about Chinese laborers in World War One. And she

adds a white lady to be in a romance with a Chinese worker, and kind of just twist it in an American dirt kind of way, and twist it and turns it and then suddenly, there's a Twitter account called Athena lose ghost, who accuses her of stealing this manuscript. Who is that, and it is magical. This is a plot driven, smart, fast, brutal critique of the publishing industry. And listen, I have a lot of feelings about the publishing industry, the big five US publishers are responsible for 80% of all revenue and publishing in America. I don't love that. I liked that Kuang talked about this novel and said, It is a horror story about loneliness in a fiercely competitive industry. And as podcasters I think that there can be some loneliness in a fiercely competitive industry, with celebrities who are like, should I talk about a show I made. So I very much connected to that, even though I'm not a writer. But I also loved the inside all the inside scoop about the publishing industry that all rang very true. As someone who owns a business with a author, I'm in a mastermind with three authors. There's a lot of angst about being an author in America. And it was a delight. It was a delight. And listen, everybody I know that hated this book, authors. So you guys, you're in a weird, you're in a weird industry. Just own it. Like just own it. So I loved this book.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 54:35

What surprised me about it. So I kind of thought that it was going to I just read it right at the end of the year. And again, because I was waiting kind of for some of the hype to die down. But I thought it was really, really good. And I was I thought it was gonna be a little more snarky than it was it was really just kind of smart criticism of the publishing industry. And then I didn't expect there to be as much of a mystery element to it as there was and that really kept me turning the pages on I think that's

Jamie Golden 55:00

what RF does really well, it's the background is hard. And so as a writer of horror, it was really easy to bring because even though the quote is it's a horror story about loneliness, it really is like a creepy, you're alone in this, but you're, you're not alone in this as an author because you have to embrace all these other people as a part of your process. But then if you've cheated the process, like that makes it even more dangerous. And so and then you just add a ghost who's got an online social media account. That's pretty got a gadget that goes got a gadget at 18 T. What happened? I

Knox McCoy 55:36

don't like the idea of if in the afterlife, you have to maintain a social media platform, I just that sounds that sounds like

Jamie Golden 55:44

you would thrive on Tiktok in the afterlife, you would thrive?

Knox McCoy 55:49

I don't know if that's true in any life, you know.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 55:53

All right, Knox, what is your number one book of 2023?

Knox McCoy 55:58

Alright, so this book, this is not the typical genre I like to spend time in. I saw this recommended somewhere the premise sold me. And then the execution of the story. And the premise, I thought was so genius. And it's Thank You for Listening. And the important thing here is Julia Whelan. Yeah, that's right, Julia. I think a lot of times, you know, I'm really attuned to the audio experience, for obvious reasons. But this is the book where I'm like, I, you have to listen to this. You can read it. Sure. But you lose 40% of the whole deal by not listening to it. And that's because Julie Whelan, arguably the goat of audiobook narration, and for her to write a story that's loosely based on her life, and have it be about an elevated industry of audiobook narrators, where they get their own award show and their big deals. I thought that was so smart, and so interesting. But also taking that that that premise on its own would be really interesting to me. But then to make it also kind of like a unintentional romance, I thought was so good. And she has such a variety of characters in this book, that she voices, she voices, everybody, which I couldn't believe because when I was listening, I thought, Well, they'd have to outsource that one, or that's definitely that's an Irish dude. But it's like, no, that's her the whole time. So I think it's kind of a parade of talent to watch her do her thing. And oh, by the way, the story is really good. Central tension between the main characters is really well done. I absolutely loved this book and experience of listening to

Kaytee Cobb 57:32

it. That is the most surprising number one that I could have, like, pulled out of my head for you. I mean, I love that you love that. Yeah. I know if somebody said, Here are 15 books. Which one do you think is the number one I would not like? Not that one, you know,

Knox McCoy 57:46

and I think it really is, it's about I want, I'm so into audiobooks right now, I feel like there's so much opportunity potential to turn it into such a different experience. And I feel like the traditional publishing is just like no author, read, and then get out. And it's like, no, you can do different voices, you can do soundscaping, you can do interludes, you can do so many creative things. And that's what Julie Whelan has done. So I think it's half of that half of I also just love this book, too. You know,

Jamie Golden 58:13

I know when he greenlit it, I was so surprised, but he was so adamant of like, you have to listen to it. And I do not listen to fiction on audiobook, and I was like, Okay, I'm gonna do it. And it was a mess. I still did it in one sitting. I just sat and was like, this is magical in every way. It really was. It's just a great book. And then it's the experience of the audio is like next level.

Kaytee Cobb 58:37

Yeah, I loved that one, too. She is

Meredith Monday Schwartz 58:39

the goat there's there's no question. She has made a name for herself there for sure. All right. So those were some really, really good lists. You guys, you brought some stuff that we had not heard of before, you brought some surprising things, fiction nonfiction mean, those were really, really excellent lists. All right, because listeners know that I didn't, you know, I said, we've got to do our top books of all time. And then or not of all time, good lord, top books of 2023. And then I said, I also want to kind of do a little

list that is favorite books, maybe they're not the best books you read, but they were favorite reading experiences. So because we did it that way. For our big show, we thought we would ask you guys, did you have an additional pick? That maybe didn't fall in your top five, but you just really, really enjoyed the experience. Jamie, do you have a book that falls into that category?

Jamie Golden 59:30

Yes. And I actually love this as something that because I think so many of us have these where it's a shared experience, or it's where we were when we read it. And this was because of how my body was falling apart. When I read this, and I had gone through this i This is nonfiction. I listen to it on audiobook in November, because I was desperate for answers for medical issues that had been plaguing me for over a year. I had heart palpitations. The EKG was clear. I had depression, but it was so random and unexpected and not in my background at all. I had acute back pain had MRI, no problems, brain fog, irritability, freakin dry eyes, you guys. I was like, I can't wear my contacts all day anymore. It was like a whole thing. And I went to so many doctors, no answers. Finally, I literally cried with my therapist, which I'm not generally a crier. But of course, I'm now dealing with depression. And I was like, What is wrong with me? I can't figure any of this out. And she was like, we think it's just perimenopause, I went

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:00:32

off, swear to God, if it is

Jamie Golden 1:00:35

pyramid, and I was so dumb, I'm in my 40s. It makes perfect sense. I then start reading this book, which is called Hot and Bothered colon. What No One Tells You About Menopause and How to Feel Like Yourself Again. And that title, because that's what it felt like. I was like, I'm not even me anymore. I'm like a different version of me that I hate. Like, I don't like her. I don't like being around her. No one else likes being around her. Finally, friends revealed that they were like, Yeah, you're kind of like a bummer to be around. We won't ask an ox, how he felt about having me as a business partner.

Knox McCoy 1:01:08

didn't notice anything. Same as always.

Jamie Golden 1:01:11

Everything was fine. And it was funny. As I was listening to you, it's Jancee Dunn. This is a research backed guide, but has a great sense of humor, because she herself was going through it and was like what's happening to me. And y'all, it was like a light bulb went on, I still had to go to three different OB GYN truly for them to help me. And when I got to the third one, and she was like, Oh, I'll get your prescription today. I was like, about gotten the car and went to Walgreens and waited until like the notification came on my app. And in the drive thru, I put a little tiny patch on my bottom, like, didn't even leave the parking lot. I was like, Please fix me. And I'm now three months in to to it. And I'm a different person, like all those symptoms disappeared or became so easy and manageable. I was like, Oh my gosh, I'm a different person. And so I owe that book. I mean, the book is great. It's not a top five. But it's a top five and my heart. It's a top five in my uterus. It's the top five in my ovaries. I love that book. And so I'm so thankful for it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:02:14

Yes, absolutely. I mean, I am so glad that this book is out there that there are so especially in the last year, so many more resources have come out. I think Jamie, our generation is Gen Gen X is going to solve menopause for the generations that come right. Like we I asked her so I just turned 50. I have a fantastic OBGYN who's like, you know what? Let's test your hormones. And you know what? Yes, let's get you the click, and I'm like, get me the click. It's not the clap. It's the click. It is the cream. It is a game changer. We do not need to live with the symptoms and wonder what is going on with us. And this is the message of this book. This is the message I really believe of our generation that we are going to solve menopause. We just don't need to have our bodies do what they've been doing at 4647 48. You know,

Jamie Golden 1:03:08

that's right. We can feel good. Yeah. And I'll say this with Knox here. Listen, I don't understand why there are 29 ways to get a diglett hard. But the fact that every woman if she lives long enough, we'll go through this. And the fact that we are not talking about like it should be every conversation.

Knox McCoy 1:03:23

Why did you say that? Having What did you say there's 29 ways to get it diglit hard and say I'll say this in front of dogs as if like that was related to me. I don't know what your

Jamie Golden 1:03:30

life is. I don't know what I know what's going on. Got it. Prescription here. Hey, I'm not the only one getting older to say, you know, so. Yeah, well, the

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:03:40

thing is, there's a lot of help for the male of our species as they get older. Right. And so now, we really are, there's a lot more resources, going towards solving this issue and making it possible for us to feel really, really good and to what is probably the back half of our lives, right, like

Jamie Golden 1:03:57

forever, like I'm gonna be, I was gonna feel like a stranger, like an alien for 50 years. I mean, I'm not gonna live 50 years, let's be honest. But still, you're not gonna live 50 years if you use a remote to change the page of your Kindle. And you know that

Knox McCoy 1:04:13

we don't know. We don't Gen Z could fix that, you know, right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:04:17

Right. All right, awesome, perfect example of what we're talking about for this sort of extra slot for a favorite book. Knox what falls into this category for you.

Jamie Golden 1:04:26

This is where the same book Jamie just recommended. We didn't we didn't talk about this before, but we should have. No this is this book called Starter Villain. And it's essentially the slugline is Charlie the main character pretty down on his luck. I think he's a substitute teacher lives in his parents house. It's not looking great for him. He inherits his uncle's supervillain business and hijinks ensue. His handler is a cat and he has to deal with some very, very potty mouth dolphins, who have a lot of feelings about him and his body and his intelligence. This is one of the most stupid and indulgent books I've ever read. But I think when you make a decision to have a book like that, I think this is by John Scalzi. You either have to, like lean all the way in or don't do it. And he leads all the way in, which makes it so charming. So funny. You're not there's not Demon Copperhead, right, there's not gonna teach me about the opioid epidemic. This is just gonna let me have a good time. And that's the kind of book This was me just an absolute blast to read.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:05:33

Yes, this was on my list of books in this category because it was just, it's the book that made me laugh the hardest and 2023 those unionizing dolphins. I just could not. I just died at one point. My husband literally asked me to leave our bed because he was like, I cannot sleep with you laughing like this. I mean, it just, I really liked his I liked Kaiju Preservation Society to by John Scalzi. But yeah, Starter Villain. what a what a fun. What a fun re Yeah,

Knox McCoy 1:06:06

absolutely ridiculous.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:06:07

Those were really, really good ones. You guys. I'm so happy that we got this list of books. I've got some new books to explore. Everyone's added to their TBR I absolutely love it. Okay, so let's then go to the fountain. And let's talk about our fountain wishes. You guys have been good enough sports to join us in this. So Jamie, if you had a wish at the fountain, what would your wish be?

Jamie Golden 1:06:32

Okay, so I'm gonna get book bossy in this because I think a lot of us read because we're we're listening to audiobooks, or we're reading on our Kindle or ebook or whatever you're doing. You're getting it from the library. You're not having necessarily the book with you. But there's a part of you that wish like for me, it was like, I want to have a little like scrapbook of all the things I've all the books I've loved this year, right. And so the algorithm served it to me on tick tock, it was a book talker, who was like, here's how I keep my book journal. And I print out each cover of my book and it put it in my book journal. And I was like, I gotta have that printer. And it is your it is the tiniest little printer. It's a Canon IV two, it's smaller than your phone. It doesn't use ink. It's just heats up the page. You put for books like you just Google image search, the book you just read you do for the time it prints on one sheet of this ink, ink filled pay. I

Knox McCoy 1:07:24

don't know what do you mean, it doesn't use ink

Kaytee Cobb 1:07:26

like your receipt? I bet it's like your receipt like is like

Jamie Golden 1:07:29

a receipt, like, okay, it's heat base. If at

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:07:33

all it is better than a receipt to mean the quote 100%. Good.

Jamie Golden 1:07:37

Yeah, it's so good. And listen, you just printed out like from the app can't you don't have to like learn, you know, Adobe, you just print it out from your little app, and you put your little four images, and then I cut them. The paper is sticky on back by nature. And so I just put my little stickers on my books, and I put my little stars. And I've seen other people do it where they're like, they write a little note or they put like, obviously, like the date they read it or who recommended the book to them or how they learned about it. I want all of us to have this. I want us all to have our little journal in our calendar, or wherever I want us to have our little tiny covers. I love it. It's my favorite thing.

Kaytee Cobb 1:08:16

That is right

Knox McCoy 1:08:18

now I know. I'm like, you cannot get a cart right now.

Jamie Golden 1:08:21

It's the IVY 2. Yeah, yeah, the IVY 2. Here's

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:08:25

the thing. I was looking at this last night for all of these reasons. So I mean, I track my books in a Google sheet but I think there are a lot of fun uses for just kind of like compiling all your covers and there's a million different ways you can use that the printer is in stock the paper is the problem right now which I'm sure it'll come back in stock. Oh sure. There's been a run on them. I

Jamie Golden 1:08:46

probably bought too much. I'm gonna be honest with you. now did I print all my family's faces and put on their Christmas gifts? Yes, I did it because that was like a fun like other thing you can do you can make your own stickers Yeah,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:09:01

they have all kinds of things they have round one square where you can do all its

Kaytee Cobb 1:09:05

color. Color Lord, why don't Kaytee them every human should be pre issued. I'm getting the pink light I asked

Knox McCoy 1:09:13

a question of like cringe no ink, and y'all said it's heat and we all accepted that as a reasonable thing. Because I didn't want to grind to a halt with color I've no idea how that works. So I have no idea how heat mix color. Okay, it's

Jamie Golden 1:09:27

called zink. Why technology zero ink what why you got you got to trust canon. They know what they're doing.

Knox McCoy 1:09:35

I believe them Can I believe these big companies someone's gotta do it

Jamie Golden 1:09:40

have sociology degrees came in has science degree they know what they're doing.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:09:44

Alright, look up the Bookstagram at @motherhorror she recently really about last syllable you horror. She recently did several different stories or posts about how she Using exactly this for her books, so that just gives you a quick visual if you just for that show notes if you want a quick visual incredible. It's so cute. The pink one is adorable. That's a really really good. The

Jamie Golden 1:10:12

pink one knox,

Knox McCoy 1:10:13

I'm gonna put in the white one in right now.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:10:16

All right, good when everyone, everyone should get those ping splash. All right, Knox, what's your what's your wish at the fountain? It's

Knox McCoy 1:10:23

not as cool as that. I'll be honest with you. So I'm a little frustrated. But it's two books, I'll go fast. One is a book, I'd like to press into the hands of dudes, I feel like sometimes it's hard to come across a book, when you talk about masculinity. It's either like, the F word is in the title, or it's a shirtless guy who's like how to how to be an alpha. And it's like, well, not like that, you know, I want to be like a reasonable man who I can. I don't know what the quote is, like, I'm useful in a shipwreck, but I'm reasonable at a dance, you know, I can do both things. So I want to recommend a book that I think does that in a way not directly. But I think at the end of the book, it really is a conversation about masculinity. And that's We Are the Light by Matthew Quick. It's told from the perspective of a man who's lost his wife in a mass shooting. And he mentors and becomes close with the boy who's the brother of the shooter. So it's, it's one of the sweetest stories, one of the sweetest books I've read, maybe ever. And then really quick. I

think if you are writing or want to write or anything kind of creative, I would love to press into your hands Open Throat by Henry Hoke, it's a really, it's a super short book. It's one I could read one setting, because it's like 10,000 words, whatever. But it's so from the perspective of a mountain lion who lives in LA. And he's just looking food looking for water. He's like, interested in helping a homeless camp. And he just eavesdropping on vapid LA hikers. It's so clever, so creative, and I think it represents like the spectrum of opportunity and possibility if you're willing to be creative and interesting. And I think that's really inspiring. Excellent.

Kaytee Cobb 1:12:03

A double press to press. That's right.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:12:06

Next, can I ask you a question? I've always wanted to ask you Sure. Do you ever reading a book? Has there ever been a book that's made you cry? Other than Old Yeller? When you were 12? Like as an adult? Man?

Knox McCoy 1:12:19

That's a big one. That's a big one. Man, I need to think about that. i Yes, there. There have been a few I cannot remember them. But I remember thinking this is weird that I'm crying about this. So let me come back to that. Let me come to that can

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:12:35

Yeah. And so whether or not it's a specific book, but like that, that is an experience that you have, because I know that the Matthew quick book that you just talked about, a lot of people have said like, it's a really, really tough read or even demon copperhead. And so I just wondered if you are wired in a way because I don't do a lot of crying in my reading even books that other people first of all, I don't. I don't want to read a lot of books. If someone says, this book is so sad, you've got to read it. I am not going to Yeah, that's not what I mean. I

Kaytee Cobb 1:13:01

pick it up. Yeah,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:13:02

I'm not looking. I'm not looking to hack my emotions in that way. But I do. But sometimes, you know, something will really hit me. I just It's something I've always wondered. is

Knox McCoy 1:13:11

it's a 100% about a son or daughter, Father situation those that's I feel like those are low blows, you know, and I don't appreciate people emotionally exploiting that. But that's when when it has happened. That's what it's about. Yeah.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:13:26

Yeah. Okay, that makes perfect sense. All right, Kaytee what is your wish at the fountain this week? Okay, everyone smile.

Kaytee Cobb 1:13:31

We wish for a book to exist. So I would like another take on my current read, which is Monsters by Claire Dederer. I'm reading it. It was Laura Tremaine secret stuff book club book late in the year last year. I'm reading it with my reading partner Katie, but I wish it were a little bit different feel like she's glossing over some tough stuff. getting way too deep into stuff I don't care about like Wagner. I don't I don't care about your vogner you know, Woody Allen Roman Polanski like they're I'm sure they're very important people. I just don't care. So what I would like, is a new take on it that's laced with humor and snark. And really, I want it written by Knox McCoy with sides by Jamie Golden. Like I want that take on monsters in pop culture, which is what this is about, right? People who we revere their work for some reason? And also, maybe they're not good people. And kind of parsing that for us for people that don't also want to be like, Oh, yes, let's talk about vogner Like I don't I don't care about vogner I don't want to read about but the idea itself is interesting. So consider this my request for your next like nonfiction book pitch to go to your agent this this addressing of how do we deal with monsters and pop culture and making it fun and relevant even though that doesn't sound like a fun topic? Because I know y'all could handle it. That's my wish. Pink splash.

Knox McCoy 1:14:51

I love that idea. I hadn't heard about that book. But I've always been so interested in you know, people say like, you guys separate the artist and yes, but But no, but where do you find the line of like, you have crossed the border of I can't separate it. Versus like, now we're so cool. I'll just like not remember that, you know? Right. Right. Right. Like, is

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:15:11

it okay to watch a rerun of the Cosby Show? But then also it makes me super uncomfortable.

Knox McCoy 1:15:18

Wow. That's a good question.

Jamie Golden 1:15:20

Yeah. Because the question at the Emmys I was like when Bill Cosby dies this year, because I predicted in 2024 predictions episode, which knocks wit and air such a chocolate in the air because he says I'm not allowed to say who's gonna die this year, although I'm very good at it. We don't have a sensor so bad. I was like, Will Bill Cosby be in the In Memoriam at next year's Emmys? And I was like, Oh, that'll be interesting how they decide that. But I read this book and I agree with what if they show him like in a jumpsuit? Oh, yeah. And it's orange crunchy.

Knox McCoy 1:15:47

Is that okay? Is that allowed? But

Jamie Golden 1:15:49

I read this too. And I felt the exact same way. I was like, I wanted this to be more. I wanted to be snarky, or I wanted it to be more gutting. And it was more like, Guys, it's hard out there. She's like, I can't I can't make a call for you. And that's the thing. She does not make a call. And I thought why don't write the book. Why right? Yeah, that's the whole point.

Knox McCoy 1:16:08

You got to make the call. gotta write the book. Yeah.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:16:11

Right. The rest of us are all sitting out here not making that's, that's interesting. Okay. Well, yes, I would read that book. If you guys want to come out with that for sure. Next year. We'll see we got the nails, nothing else on your plates. All right. Well, I strap up because I'm gonna make you both really uncomfortable. With my wish.

Kaytee Cobb 1:16:32

I'm already uncomfortable.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:16:33

You know what? I probably meant buckle up.

Jamie Golden 1:16:38

You didn't strap up? Oh, no. Follow the subconscious. That's right. What

Knox McCoy 1:16:43

Freud wants you to do, you know,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:16:45

buckle up. All right, I'm gonna make you uncomfortable. Okay, because my wish, of course, is going to be that absolutely. Everyone would listen to the Popcast. Listen, regular listeners have currently reading know that the podcast is my favorite podcast of all time. I mentioned it. So often, I am guaranteeing you that lots of people are rolling their eyes every time they hear me mention it. But if you haven't listened to Knox and Jamie showed the podcast, you're truly missing out. There is no question, of course that you come to the Popcast for all things pop culture, I get my very best recommendations for movies and TV from the show. And I use their weekly Instagram posts to plan our weekend watching, not just for me and Johnny. But even when we want to watch with all of us, including Jackson, Knox has his dad light recommendation, say let me know what is good. And even more importantly, let me know what not to waste my time on. And they keep me in the know with what's happening in Hollywood. And behind the scenes in how big shows and movies are made. Yes, they talk about who's starring in what and who's dating who, but more often, they're talking the business behind pop culture. And that fascinates me. So you come to the podcast for the pop culture, but you stay for Knox and Jaime, they are two of the smartest people I have heard on mic they take their jobs so seriously, these two don't just pop in and goof off for an hour. They are highly prepared with their spicy takes, they're thoughtful. And their conversations while often making me giggle are nuanced and considered. So those are all great reasons to listen. But for those of us who are BFOTS, which is Best Friends of the show, which means

we support them on Patreon. We get so much more. Knox and Jamie have led us behind the curtain of their small business, they let us see what it's been like as they've built that business over the last 10 years. Against all odds in a baby industry back in the day. We've seen them find their voice and find their way. We've seen them stick with it when things got hard. We've seen each one of them jump into making the podcast their day job, which is a huge act of bravery. And then go on to build the team that they've built. All done with transparency, decency, and integrity. So yes, Knox and Jamie, you do a comedy podcast about pop culture. But for those of us who listen to every word that you put out, you are much more you're people we admire and hope to emulate in our business. And I'm so happy to be able to tell each of you how inspired I am by your work. So that's my wish. Everyone listen to the Popcast. You will be so glad that you did ping splash that

Jamie Golden 1:19:37

is so nice. Kaytee, why didn't you say anything nice about us.

Kaytee Cobb 1:19:42

Meredith said she was going to do something silly.

Knox McCoy 1:19:47

Exactly. Like we demanded. You read it, so I appreciate all right. Yeah.

Kaytee Cobb 1:19:52

You did a great payment in books. Yes,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:19:55

yes.

Knox McCoy 1:19:56

No, that was very lovely. I really, I really appreciate that. I That means a lot you know, just to get some context from people outside because you don't always know who's listening. So very lovely unkind thing to say to us. And

Kaytee Cobb 1:20:08

our listeners are like they're they're gonna die if they haven't been deceased for the past hour and a half. They are dead now because they I guarantee they all loved getting to hear y'all on Well, we welcome

Jamie Golden 1:20:19

them to strap up as well and come on over and listen to The Popcast. We do we right.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:20:25

Yeah, to wrap up and head over there right now. All right, so excited. 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. And you

Kaytee Cobb 1:20:37

can find me Kaytee at @notesoTbookmarks on Instagram, Knox and Jamie, where should we find you?

Jamie Golden 1:20:43

You can find us on The Popcast on Instagram. You can find us at @KnoxMcCoy and @Jamiebgolden there as well. And you can find if you go to Knox and jamie.com/books You can find all the books that we have greenlit over the last 10 years of the show are treasure trove. That's right.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:20:59

All right. Full show notes with the title of every book we mentioned in this episode, and timestamps. So you can zoom right to where we talked about it can be found on our website at currentlyreadingpodcast.com. You

Kaytee Cobb 1:21:12

can also find us on Instagram at @currentlyreadingpodcast or email us currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com. And

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:21:18

if you want more of this kind of content, of course, you can join us as a bookish friend on Patreon. You can also rate and review us on Apple podcasts and shout us out on social media. All three of those things make a huge difference toward us finding our perfect audience.

Kaytee Cobb 1:21:34

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 1:21:41

Thank you, Knox and Jamie for being here. We are so appreciative of you taking the time and this has been the most fun. We were so much for having us. Thank you. All right. Until next week. Happy reading Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 1:21:53

Happy reading Meredith. Happy reading friends