



# Season 6, Episode 28: Book To Film Excitement + Boss My TBR

Mon, Feb 19, 2024 • 55:41

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:10

Hey readers. Welcome to the currently reading podcast. We are bookish best friends who spend time every week talking about the books that we've read recently. And as you know, we won't shy away from having strong opinions. So get ready.

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:23

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

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:33

Meredith Monday, Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas, and I love it when a fictional book boyfriend comes to life. And

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:43

I'm Kaytee Cobb, I'm a homeschooling mom of four living in Arizona, and I love to get a little book bossy sometimes. This is episode number 28 of season six, and we are so glad you're here. Meredith. I want what how did you manifest a book boyfriend into existence? I can't wait to hear about. Yes.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:59

Well, it was a lot of it was a lot of manifesting. Yeah,

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:03

I bet it was interesting. Okay, I am driving today. So I'm gonna let everybody know that our deep dive, we are going to boss TBRs again today, which we haven't done in probably about three months. So it was time for another bit of bossiness. And we're excited for that.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 01:19

I love it. You picked two really, really good case studies. I'm very excited about it. Yeah,

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:24

I had fun kind of reading into them a little bit. Yeah, I make some assumptions about people when I bought their TBR. So I don't know if you do this, too. Yeah. Anyhow, we'll get started the way we always do with our bookish moments of the week. Meredith, what is yours?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 01:38

All right. Well, I will tell you that all of a sudden, this week, I went on my Instagram and the little red bubble said that I had like 300 messages, which for me, and my little tiny Instagram account is a lot. Apparently, everyone had decided in exactly the same time and I am grateful for every single person who did to let me know that the first look at Ewan McGregor starring as the count in The Gentleman in Moscow trailer had come out. Uh huh. And everything about the still photography that they released and the little snippets that they released for The Gentleman in Moscow. And I don't actually know if it's a movie, or a series.

**Kaytee Cobb** 02:24

I think it's a movie. I feel like that's what I've heard. Okay, either way,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 02:28

I will take it. Everything looks perfect. It feels like they've got the casting. Exactly. Right. They've got the look of course of the Hotel Metropol Exactly right. And Ewan McGregor, who I'm perfectly fine with. He looks so great as Count Rohstoffe. I am so excited for this movie. I am so excited that this fictional book boyfriend has come to life and He is everything that I was hoping that he would be. So sometimes I'm nervous about a an adaptation coming out. In this case, I'm just wholly excited.

**Kaytee Cobb** 03:06

Okay. See, I have to admit, I was a little nervous, like, in my head. I don't cast people. But once people started saying Ewan McGregor I was like, really? But I love that you've now seen some of these images. And you're saying yes, we're all on board. Everybody get on board? Yes,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 03:22

absolutely. He The other thing that really makes me feel just unmitigated excitement instead of trepidation is the fact that I know that Amor Towles has said that he's really really happy with this adaptation. And I feel like he doesn't need to say that if that's not how he feels. Right. So he's, he's really behind it. He's sharing it a lot. He's super excited about it. So I'm just I can't wait to be back in that world. And I'm wondering if a reread like a quick reread needs to happen before I watched some movie, I think probably Yeah,

**Kaytee Cobb** 03:55

I think I think probably, okay, my bookish moment this week. I already mentioned, of course, that our deep dive is about bossing people's TBRs. But I've been practicing that in my daily life as well. Not only do we have a family friend living with us right now for the past month and a half, who's basically letting me choose all his books. He finished his book, he asked me what to read next, I choose a few things for him. It's like if you had a child that actually takes all your suggestions instead of one that you have to trick into reading the things you think they'll like, it's so magical. And then my husband had a friend

come into town. So these are all dudes that I'm bossing last night and the last time he visited us. I had suggested a few books. This time. He said he loved both of them, but couldn't remember my other Recs. So could I please help? And of course, the answer is yes, of course. The answer always. So my favorite things about this, that it's twofold. One, I get a better feel for what these dudes like to read and then find out stuff that they haven't heard of. That's in that bookstore section. So it's like oh, yeah, you read from this middle like best seller shelf. Have you seen these ones up here and these ones down here, those might be of interest to you. And then I can push them a little bit outside that comfort zone as well with suggestions that seem up the right alley, but expand the wheelhouse a little bit. That's totally rad. And both of them enjoy audiobooks. So superb performances are highly valued. And that makes it very fun and bookish for me as well. That is

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 05:23

very fun. There are few things in the world more satisfying than having someone come back to you after you've given them a recommendation and say, That was so good. Can you help me again? I mean, that is that is the absolute ultimate. I love that. So, so much. So

**Kaytee Cobb** 05:40

fun. Okay, let's get into our current reads. I've got a lot of interesting stuff to talk about today. So I want to get started. What is your first current read?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 05:48

All right. I'm excited about my books, too. So my first one is part of my project to become a completist of Simone St. James. So I went back back back in her catalog and I read Broken Girls, have you read this one Kaytee? I

**Kaytee Cobb** 06:03

don't think I have. I've only read either two or three of hers. And I don't think this is one of them. Okay,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 06:08

so I like this one a lot. The here's the setup. As nearly always in St. James novels, we start with two timelines, and they're in Vermont, which I love. Okay, the first one. The first timeline is Vermont in 1950. In this timeline, we are at Idlewild Hall, which is a place where the families have kind of troublemaking girls send them when they need to get them out of town. If you know what I mean. Feels like

**Kaytee Cobb** 06:36

a place I would have been sent by my parents.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 06:38

Exactly. It's the all the girls that you would guess in 1950 would be sent out of town right and all the all their trespasses. Alright, so in this small town where Idlewild is located, there are rumors that the boarding school is haunted for roommates at the school bond over their terrible treatment, the horrible food and their very real fears and their friendship starts to form. But then one of them goes missing mysteriously then our other timeline is Vermont in 2014. The lead character there is journalist Fiona Sheridan and Fiona is obsessed with understanding the events surrounding her older sister's death. 20

years ago, her sister's body was found lying in the overgrown fields near the ruins of Idlewild Hall, and though her sister's boyfriend was tried and convicted of the murder of Fiona has never bought him as the doer. And then Fiona finds out that Idlewild Hall is being renovated because it's been kind of like abandoned, it was abandoned for a long period of time between 1950 and 1914, some period of time in between. And now it's been purchased, the purchase is very much being kept under wraps. And so there's this unknown benefactor who's bought it and is renovating it. And so she decides Fiona, the journalist decides that she's gonna use writing a story about the renovation as a cover from doing some sleuthing of her own about what might have happened to her sister, then there's a shocking discovery during the renovations that proves there's a link not just to her sister, but to crimes that happened in the past. All right. Like I said, I love Simone St. James. I absolutely love everything about the way that she does a ghost story. I think she's one of the best out there. And this is one of her earliest mysteries published in 2018. And it's one that I've had on my shelf for a long time, but was kind of like saving it. I don't know, for what I absolutely love the way she does these dual timelines between the past and the present. Her stories, as I said, are centered in Vermont, which is one of my favorite places in the world. Fun facts about me it is a lifetime dream of mine to live in Vermont, I hope very much to make that happen one day. This book interested me because it had a lot of historical depth to it. I hadn't expected not only the 1950s Vermont institution for girls kind of setting, but learning quite a bit about Nazi Germany and the fact that there were prison camps that were especially for women and children, and that they often have very few records associated with them. This comes into play in the story. It's almost as if these women and children didn't matter even a little tiny bit any record keeping that happened in Nazi Germany certainly wasn't happening for women and children. And the relationships between the women in the story are both heartbreaking and empowering. I loved the 1950s timeline and the strong female friendships that came out of so much pain, but women are like that, aren't they? Especially in St. James hands. This is a perfect winter read. It set mostly in November and December and the weather and the bleak Vermont winter is a character in and of itself. I absolutely love the way that St. James does her ghosts she can give you enough supernatural to make it creepy and spooky, but not so much that you have to completely suspend your disbelief or keep every single light on. It's just a really good kind of in between place like a spooky ghost story, if you will. That coupled with her smart female characters and she is almost always a hit for me. She reminds me so much of another of my favorite ghost mystery writers, Jennifer McMahon, and as we head into the last bits of winter, this is a time that I love to pick up their books in this one is a great one. This is *The Broken Girls* by Simone St. James

**Kaytee Cobb 10:42**

does sound deliciously creepy. Okay, my first book this week requires a few warnings, because that's where I'm going this week. So I'm going to talk about *Butcher and Blackbird* by Brynne Weaver. Okay, this is the book that I referred to when we talked to Knox and Jamie and I scarred the man children at the AT and T desk. Yes, I'm excited to set it up for you all today, but it's a doozy so this section is not for little ears. please fast forward to Meredith's next current read if you're listening with children, or are squeamish in any way yourself regarding murder or sex, because both of those things are a big part of this setup. There's a big swath of people who just hit the forward they're just like fast forward a lot. So let's meet Sloane and Rowen. They meet when Rowan discovers Sloane locked in a cage with a rotting dead body beside her despite the nasty circumstances Yes, there are maggots mentioned in the first few paragraphs of this book. The two find themselves drawn to each other. And they are some of the only people who can be drawn to each other. They are both serial killers. huge fans of each other's

work and they decide to enter a friendly competition. They're the same kind of serial killers that Dexter is they kill bad guys got

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 11:57

it. That's why we can root for them love

**Kaytee Cobb** 12:00

killing bad guys. Yeah, like they take a very sick joy in killing bad guys. Because they're both serial killers. They're huge fans of each other's work, they decide to enter a friendly competition with one another. Each August the two killers compete and an annual game of blood and suffering. They are sent to a undisclosed location until the game starts with orders to find a target murderer that person in the most gruesome way possible. And it is gruesome, and dark, and also steamy. This is where it gets weird, right? The two killers meet year after year. And their attraction toward each other grows by leaps and bounds every time. They have a lot of fun together, even though it's a competition and they're very protective of one another. However, even if you're on board with all of that, you should know that this book is the first one where I used my spicy scale in the spreadsheet, and I realized I needed to rework it in a big way. As a reminder, in our currently reading tracker, we have a spy scale of one to five and five is the category thrusting and words you don't say in polite company. This book is so far beyond that level. It's laughable. So if you've ever thought we went too far on the show with dragons or doorknobs know that the oddness factor in those books might be more but the spice factor and this one makes them look pretty vanilla by comparison. Also of note is that the audiobook is performed by two narrators. And if you can handle both the gore and the spice in your eardrums, I do think that's the way to go. It's a literal performance. It's a literary performance, rather than just two people alternating chapters, not in the sound effects and kitschy music way but in the way the audio was actually engineered. So it feels like these two characters are in conversation with each other, rather than recording and two booths across the country from each other. And finally, the list of trigger warnings is truly mind boggling. You can find those on story graph. Or you can take a listen to the reel shared by easy cat on January 31, which will link in the show notes where Jaysen mentions some of the most egregious and surprising entries in that trigger warning list. It's extensive. All that being said, I know this book has a perfect audience out there. And I was pretty close to being that person for this author. I really enjoyed it from beginning to end, but it's not going to be for every reader in so so so many ways. I gave it four and a half stars. I thought it was really good. Really propulsive I loved being in the room where it happens with regard to the killing. And I thought like it was just dark and creepy and awful in all the best ways. So this is Butcher & Blackbird by Brynne Weaver.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 14:38

So I have a couple of questions. So I've had several conversations with people who I guess because of the you know the the gore factor maybe thought that it would be something that I would be interested in I mean like you had me at maggots you lost me at steamy I don't like to I don't like to mix my murder and sexy time. So that's just not of interest to me. Yeah, but I know this has been a big tick tock book, right? Like,

**Kaytee Cobb** 15:03

it's, I didn't think so. And it was also a book of the month choice, which was pretty surprising. Interesting.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 15:07

That is interesting. Okay. So several people have asked me about this, and they've said, Okay, I'm, like, two chapters in and it's a little much for me, should I keep reading?

**Kaytee Cobb** 15:19

No. Okay, this is definitive. If you make it, a chapter in or two chapters in, and you're hoping that's as bad as it gets, and maybe you can keep reading reader, no, honey, no, back away, set the book down. In fact, Candace, and I read it together. And we talked kaytee into picking it up. And she did DNF just a few chapters in because she was like, Guys, I can't with you know, the references to eyeballs or the removal of skin, like, it's just too much. She made it through maybe three or four chapters, and I gotta get out. So

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 15:50

if you sample it, and it's not for you, right from the start, you don't need to worry about going too much further, it tells you what it is from the very beginning. Okay, well, that's, that's, that's good to know. I love that. Okay. Well, I'm glad that it works for you, and that you were really clear the ways it might not work for other people. So I think that's because

**Kaytee Cobb** 16:06

there's a lot of ways and I don't want anybody coming to me and saying like, you weren't clear that this was going to be so horrific in one direction or another, like y'all, if you have any kind of scale for horror, in any of those areas. It's off the charts on all of them. So don't pick it up in any of those areas. Yeah, exactly. All right.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 16:26

Very, very useful to know. Okay, well, if all the people who tuned out if their turn tuning back in, I think that swath of people will be totally okay with the book that I'm bringing next because it's a cozy mystery. Excellent.

**Kaytee Cobb** 16:38

Say we're going back to comfort This is a very

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 16:42

closed door. No Gore, we're all okay you although you know, I love the gore but not here. Okay, this is Agatha Raisin in the Wellspring of Death. This is the seventh in the very popular someone say like the most popular cozy mystery series that there is by MC Beaton. Here's the setup. In the seventh book of the series, Agatha Raisin is trying to meld trying to sort of gel herself into the village life in the Cotswolds were seven books into the series, and she's still trying to do this, okay, it's not, it ain't easy to mix in, right? It's slow going. And she sometimes Agatha does not want to accept that village life is very different from London. And the villagers are not really ever going to accept a true Londoner into their



mix. But she keeps trying. So in our story, Agatha volunteers to handle the publicity because she's a PR Maven retired now. But that's what she did in her in her business life. She handles the publicity for a new company that is bottling the water from the village spring. And this is a venture that is proved to be really controversial. And some of the villagers are totally against this company having access to the spring, taking any of the water and they're worried that is just going to turn their beautiful bucolic village into just a corporate mess and this is what they don't want. They don't want it to change their peaceful way of life. So tempers run very high, and Agnes finds herself with a potential public relations disaster. And then of course, a body turns up in those same spring waters. And Agatha and her on again off again. Paramore James have to find out who done it. All right. I absolutely could not resist listening to this short ish audio book on the heels of my trip to the Cotswolds. Can I tell you how much I love the Cotswolds? Oh my god, I was in the mood where I wanted to revisit all the gorgeous countryside that Betsy and I had seen. And this book was exactly what I needed. We are obviously square within the cozy mystery realm here. So much so that this series is often used, as I said as the as an example of the entire genre. It's cozy, it features a female lead character who has various romantic entanglements while also solving mysteries. And Agatha herself is a gem. She is a perfect Enneagram eight. She says what she means and she means what she says. And she doesn't take any guff from anybody. There's a lot to like here, including predictably interesting village murders lots of villagers who hate each other and talk about each other behind their backs. And lots of time for tea, and coffee and snacks before the fire. I read the first three books in the series many years ago. And since then, I had read all the way up to the seventh one on this read, it became clear that there were pieces of the storytelling that had not aged well. It's been a while since I dipped into the series, and I mean hadn't aged. Well literally. Agatha herself is only in her mid 50s I myself just turned 50 And yet all the way through the story. She has inner thoughts and complaints about being old, but she's not old. She is vibrant and energetic and described as being very beautiful and youthful. But internally, all she does is think about wrinkle cream and cellulite, and how much better she was when she was younger. I don't love that at all. Again, I believe that 50 is just the beginning. She's acting like the end. And also, there is a lot of talk about thinness or fatness or bodies in general, in this book, people are often described by the shape of their body. And I heard that very, very clearly on this listen, and I didn't like it at all. Now, I do realize that these books were written a long time ago at a very different time when our sensitivity levels were way lower than they are now. And that's a good thing. We've made some really necessary changes. And I would be willing to bet that later books in the series. It's actually a very long series get better on both of these fronts. At least I would hope that they do it even with those issues. I always love knowing that Agatha Raisin is there for me when I need her for a laugh. Or just a few giggles and for a well solved village murder. This is Agatha Raisin and the Wellspring of Death by MC Beaton. And the audio. The audio was great on this series.

**Kaytee Cobb 21:18**

Okay, that's good to know. Also, for some reason, I'm getting the opposite like the cozy vibes of the creepy version of The Drowning Kind by Jennifer McMahon this like spring in a town and they want to bottle the water and the wellspring of death. I'm like, oh, it's the drowning kind except it's cozy and cute. Yeah,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 21:37

it's a lot of village politics, I think are the main thrust of what's going on here. We're only we only get to visit this beautiful spring setting like one time. Ah, but yeah, but it you know, a lot to be said for it. But there's a lot that doesn't age well about it, which is often what happens when you dip into these series that have been written since the mid 90s. You know, I mean,

**Kaytee Cobb** 22:01

yeah, that's what you're gonna get. It doesn't feel like it was that long ago. But it turns out, that's 30 years. It will

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 22:07

I mean, it does when you have a child who was born in the mid 90s. And you know exactly how long ago it was. Well,

**Kaytee Cobb** 22:12

that was just not very nice to bring up.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 22:15

I don't forget.

**Kaytee Cobb** 22:18

Okay, okay. My book is also UK adjacent about it while I was there. So I'm going to talk about Landlines by Rainer when this book is like a British version of Bill Bryson's A Walk in the Woods, except it's a couple walking across the entire island of the UK from the very northern end all the way to the southern tip. And it's not only does it have some of that UK vibe in it, it also has the atmosphere and the weather as a character like you talked about with The Broken Girls your first book, so it's like a friendly mishmash of both of Meredith's books so far. Raynor Winn the author and her husband whose name is Moth, which I don't really like, but that's his name, so we're going with it. Moth are locked down moth flying like a butterfly, like a moth. Like mo th Yes. I don't like it short for something. I feel like it has to be but what like multiple be some

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 23:10

British family name. Yeah. Anyway, okay. Go ahead. Moth All

**Kaytee Cobb** 23:13

right. Yeah, Raynor and her husband Moth are locked down during the pandemic in the UK. And Moth has a rare disease that involves neuro degeneration. He's becoming less aware and less physically capable by the day and entering lockdown precipitates that decline in a big way. He's hardly moving around. He's rarely got that mental stimulation that like keeps his faculties intact. This couple is known for their previous adventures walking various paths around the small island of the UK as they did in The Salt path. Raynor's first book when she has this crazy idea to start another big walk, it reads like a challenge to them both. Sometimes he falls crossing the kitchen. Why would I go on a giant hike from one end to the other, they gear up for a small chunk of trail. It's called the Cape Wrath trail that stretches through northern Scotland. There are truly harrowing moments on this first trail, including like



cliff faces that they're basically clinging to to not fall. And their walking plan is foiled again and again by trail closures and Pandemic restrictions. But they walk and miraculously, moss starts to see improvement in the sureness of his steps and the acuity of his mental processes. So when they get to the end of that first trail, they are in Fort William, where we stayed for a few nights and they decide to continue over and over again. They get to the end of a set of trails and decide to keep going. They end up walking about 1000 miles total from the very northern end of Scotland all the way to the southern tip of England to where their home is. This book is full of adoration for the English countryside, the landscape of the UK, the locks the hillside and the people. It has some very fun and funny moments as well as the challenges you might expect from walking such a huge trail. equipment failure in Jewry encounters with wildlife and more. There are times during their walk when she meets people who have read her first book. Some are thrilled to meet her. Some don't know who she is and recommend her own book to her. Oh my gosh, this other lady walked this trail. She's so inspiring. And there are people who say, We You're the reason I'm on this stupid walk, what the heck are you doing? So it's a whole gamut of readers. Overall, this book was hard to read in some spots for me because I regularly disagreed with their decisions like when you're in nursing an injury. Maybe it's time to go in for a while and actually let your feet heal from those horrendous blisters you're describing. But I did really love not only getting to accompany them on this walk, but also revisit some of the places and landscapes that I fell in love with on my own journey to the UK, which made it very special to me. So this is called Landlines by Raynor Winn that sounds

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 25:51

really interesting. I mean, for a lot of reasons. It sounds really interesting.

**Kaytee Cobb** 25:55

Yeah, that's really good.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 25:57

That's excellent. I love that and it had it takes you back to our journey with when we were in the Cotswolds. I kept thinking like, because, you know, people in the Cotswolds, they love to walk first of all, they love their dogs well, all over the UK. They love their dogs, they take them everywhere. Like every restaurant, I could not believe I was totally fine to fix. I love dogs, but and then they love to walk. And they have a lot of feelings about where you can walk and where you can't walk. And there have been murders committed over like neighbor on neighbor violence. Because of these, like, I can't remember what they're called. But like the walk right, like right away. Yes. Yeah, kind of issues. Yes. So that's the one thing that I kept thinking is like, you better know that you're walking in the right place, or if you're some guy with a shotgun is going to come out at you. Okay, my third one is totally different, largely different than what I usually read. And I'm, I loved it so much. I just finished it. And so I normally wait a little bit, you know, because I have a queue of books. I just finished this book. I have to talk about it right now. It's called Mrs. Quinn's Rise to Fame by Olivia Ford. Here's the setup. 77 year old Jenny Quinn is a lifelong Baker, a small town village citizen, wife of her husband Bernard for almost 60 years. And she and Bernard have led a very quiet life. After seeing that many of her friends were embarking on new hobbies and interests, she decides that it's time to carve out a little something for herself. spice things up had a little bit of excitement to her life. So she secretly applies to be a contestant on the huge mega hit the primetime TV show that in our book is called Britain bakes. We all of course, understand

that is the Great British Bake Off. Yes. And that, my friends is all you need to know about the setup of this book. The blurb goes way further and tells you so much. That is delightful to discover as you're reading it. I don't know why this blurb went that far. So I'm going to stop it right there and just say that's all you need to know. I would love to be able to resist the urge to call this book a sweet confection. But I'm not going to be able to actually, maybe it's not so much a confection as a delicious slice of your favorite kind of cake. When I saw that Elizabeth Barnhill from Fabled recommended this book on her Instagram, it struck me, she mentioned, sometimes you just need a little bit of sweetness. And that is not the kind of book recommendation that I normally get from Elizabeth. So I was intrigued, because I know what kind of sweetness that Elizabeth likes. She likes it like I do. Sweet is good when you're in the right mood, but not overly sweet. And I can definitely see why she loved this book. It's sweet. Yes, but it's also poignant. And I also don't love that word, but it perfectly describes what this book is. I spent a lot of time being super happy and comforted. But also there were moments where I felt myself tearing up a little bit not unlike that feeling that you get when you're reading a Richard Osman book, for example, The Thursday Murder Club. I love Mrs. Quinn Jenny. And the fantastic 77 year old protagonist that she is I love the second chance that she gives herself at doing something that she'd never dreamed of doing before. I loved her relationship with Bert Barnard, her husband of 60 years and their sweet sweet relationship made me hopeful for the way that Johnny and I might be after we've been married for that long. I loved the baking competition. I love the Great British Bake Off. So this was a slam dunk for me. I enjoyed the behind the scenes look at how the competitors plan their bakes and practice them. And I loved of course the description of all the baked goods don't read this if you don't want to be hungry because it's going to make you hungry. It also has short chapters and it was a quick read Elizabeth read it in one sitting. I read it in two shorter ones. I read a lot of murder and sometimes it's nice to read a book we're just not a lot of bad Bad things happen. So, chef's kiss or Baker's hug for Mrs. Quinn's Rise to Fame by Olivia Ford. This is a book that I think almost everyone would enjoy. It

**Kaytee Cobb** 30:13

sounds fantastic. I just finished the most recent season of Great British Bake Off. And whenever that happens, like we went into junior Bake Off, but it just doesn't scratch that same itch for me. I love you know, the acerbic nature of Paul Hollywood. I love falling for a baker. And there's always a little old lady that you're like, Oh, I just want her to do a great job. Like, I just want to give her a hug and tell her to keep going. So that sounds perfect for right this very second for me, right?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 30:40

It's very, very good. I loved it so much.

**Kaytee Cobb** 30:43

I do know that Elizabeth does like a curmudgeon book. And this is a 77 year old protagonist. Call her no, no curmudgeon.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 30:52

Okay, no curmudgeon here at all. Interesting. Yeah, just said just a really fun 77 year old woman and, you know, we find out a lot about her life. And there's a lot of nuance and a lot of substance there. But it's a feel good book. It's, you can rest and be comforted in it as you read it. And sometimes, I really need that. Mm

**Kaytee Cobb** 31:14

hmm, definitely. Okay. My third book this week is called All About Love by Bell Hooks. And I read it in October. But this felt like the absolute perfect time to bring it to the show. So I wanted to capture that moment where we're talking about Valentine's Day love. And of course, Black History Month with Bell Hooks, and All About Love is the first Bell Hooks book that I've ever read, but it's not gonna be the last it has 13 chapters, and each one focuses on a different aspect of love. And very rarely does it have to do with romantic love, which is why I think it's possible to universally recommend this one. We've got chapters focusing on the way grief works through love the way that love shows itself through honesty or commitment or justice, we get to examine the ways that love in our childhood shapes our adulthood. This book is now 25 years old, published in 1999. And at this point, accepting the lack of cell phones and the ways we love or don't love each other. Every word still feels applicable today. It's not like it feels like oh, yeah, we used to think like that 25 years ago, but now we have Tinder like what? You know, it doesn't feel dated in the slightest. That's not to say that this book is a gift style book collection, a gift book style collection of like blurbs and anecdotes and cuteness, where it's just sweetness all the way through. Bell Hooks confronts racism and sexism and misogyny in these chapter vignette type things. She also talks about child abuse and sexual abuse. So it's not at all a dreamy saccharin sweetness. readers might need to be gentle with themselves as they pick it up. But that's also love to face the hard parts to acknowledge that love is complex and multifaceted. That sometimes love means walking away. Like I said, I read this one back in October with Katie, but I wanted to wait to bring it this month for those reasons I mentioned above. And I would love to hear from other people who read this one or who decide to pick it up this month, whether it's to scratch that love itch, but maybe I don't want to read a fluffy romance. Or it's to add another black author to your February reading list. It's a true backlist beauty. And I'm really glad I read it. I'm still thinking about it. It's been four months since I finished this book. And I still think about some of the stories that she's shared in these 13 chapters. So this one is All About Love by Bell Hooks. Does she talk about why she chose 13 chapters? Is there significance there? No, she doesn't talk about it. But it does feel significant, doesn't it? It does. Okay, those were our six current reads. We kind of went all over the map there, which I love. And now we get to boss some TBRs which is always fun. So we're gonna get started the way we always do with our boss ease. That's what we're gonna call them today, or victims is usually what we call them. But

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 34:00

maybe our employees, if we're their bosses,

**Kaytee Cobb** 34:03

were well we're the boss errs. Yeah. And they're our employees.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 34:08

I mean, that's what you usually

**Kaytee Cobb** 34:09

don't get to work or reading folks. Here's your to do list. Okay, our first one is a bookish friend named Wendy Toringo and she said this is exactly what I need. Here are her five choices. The Priory of the Orange Tree by Samantha Shannon, The City We Became by NK Jemison, The Way of Kings by

Brandon Sanderson, The Pillars of the Earth by Ken Follett, and House of Earth and Blood by Sarah J. Moss, Queen Maas. I feel like we have a common theme here. Which is that big

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 34:45

wigs gigantic afraid of chunky books.

**Kaytee Cobb** 34:48

She's like 700 pages had to TBR love, love it. And that's amazing. Although as I was going through this, I was like, Wait, are all these still on her? TBR because She needs to be told it's time to read that chunky book like maybe, maybe I'm reading it the wrong way? Well, I

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 35:06

mean, I think with the the fantasy through line, there's definitely not all of them. But the fantasy through line, I think. I think Wendy probably is a reader who who enjoys a chunky book, like she's not going to shy away from that. And as someone else who feels the same way, I mean, I a few times a year, love to make sure that I'm picking up a big huge book. And it just, there's something very satisfying about it. Although what I have learned, and I'll bet you that Wendy has learned to this to that, for me, the best way to make it through big books like this is to do it on my Kindle, but to have a hard copy of the book that sits on my nightstand. And so then every day or so I will go through and move my bookmark through. Sometimes there's maps or illustrations or other features of the print book that I enjoy being able to look at. But if you read it on your Kindle, then you you don't have to constantly be thinking about how heavy this bucket is and how your wrists are hurting and all of that. So I had some pretty strong thoughts about what so our goal with Boss my TBR is to winnow this list of five down to three. And then to give you the order in which we think that they should be read, correct? Yeah. And I, I had some pretty strong thoughts on this. Okay, so I think that she should start with The Priory of the Orange Tree by Samantha Shannon. The main reason I'm going I haven't dove dived. Haven't dived dove haven't dived into this book. Why can't I hear it? Why is it I can't hear. And I haven't dive in depth

**Kaytee Cobb** 36:42

my feet into this. Let's just get rid of that verb and I

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 36:46

have a degree in English but okay, I am yet to dive into this book. How about that?

**Kaytee Cobb** 36:52

Okay. The reason I am yet to dive in Okay, started it. Yeah. Okay.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 36:57

No, you can keep all that Megan. It's good for people to know we talk like regular people. Okay. The Priory of the Orange Tree has been foist upon me in the best possible way. By Holly Farrell, at birdbrainbooks, again, highly recommend to follow of At birdbrainBooks. She is great on Instagram, and co host of the hearts and daggers podcast, which we love. So high recommendations there. So she has multiple times taking the time to send me really thoughtful messages about why she thinks that I would really, really enjoy prior to the orange tree. And she just thinks for someone who reads fantasy like I do

where I don't want a ton of worldbuilding. But I do like an interesting magical construction, where I do like characters that you can really root for, if you can forget how big it is. It's really really worth the time. So that's where I think she should start.

**Kaytee Cobb** 36:58

And dragons don't forget the dragons.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 37:07

Exactly. Right. So it's an incredibly gorgeous cover. I mean,

**Kaytee Cobb** 37:16

oh, yes, right. Definitely gorgeous.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 37:17

So start there. And then I think you got to move to the Pillars of the Earth One of my favorite books of all time by Ken Follett. I think it is one of those books, that is an almost perfect reading experience. Yes, it is long, but it is also enjoyable. That's what she said. And I feel like everyone Pillars of the Earth is one of those books that can be handed to almost anyone and they are really going to enjoy the experience of reading it. Historical Fiction going back to a time period that we know that I knew very little about on its face. It's about building a church. That sounds really dull. It is absolutely not. There are some scenes in that book that are seared in my memory. It absolutely flies, the pages absolutely fly. So I think that should be in the middle. And then I think she should round it out with the city we became by NK Jemison, which is totally different from the first two books, again, moves at a fantastic pace has a premise that is really something different. really doing something different than a lot of the other fantasy on her list. And just incredibly well written at the sentence level by NK Jemison. So that's my that's my my threesome. That's the order. What do you think of that, Kaytee?

**Kaytee Cobb** 39:20

Okay, my first question for Wendy if this were conversation was going to be if she's read all the rest of the Sarah J Moss universe, because I've been told that especially if you have not finished the Avatar series, you can't dive in to house of Earth and blood by Sarah J. Moss because it fits within the world. She's building this huge world and then she has the series that take place within it is what I've been told. So I would put that first if she's already like 15 books in to Sarah J Moss and she wants more of that. But if not, if she has more from those other series to read, mine was almost exactly the same. So I want to start with Priory of the Orange Tree, I put city we became in the middle because it's a little bit shorter. So it's going to break up that reading experience a little bit. It is very like urban fantasy, it's going to add some interesting diversity to her reading, and then Pillars of the Earth because for the exact same reason, I just want everybody to read The Pillars of the Earth. It's such a fantastic novel, like I can't not put my hands on my chest when I talk about it, because it's so wonderful. So, I mean, I've heard great things about the Brandon Sanderson as well. But if I have to choose, those are the ones I'm going with. Right, exactly.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 40:40**

So okay, consensus between the two of us a little bit of an order change, but generally, I think that those three are really, really strong. Yes. All right, Kaytee, let me tell you what the second one is, and you can tell me what you what order you want it to do it in first. The second one is the second bossy is Sara Oliver and the five books that are on her TBR that she's deciding in between are Ordinary Monsters by J M Miro. Bel Canto by Ann Patchett, A Curse So Dark and Lonely by Brigid Kemmerer, Death in the Family by Tessa Wegert. And Funny You Should Ask by Elissa Sussman. Kaytee, what did you think? I mean, this is a very different list. It's got a lot more variety of book on it. What did you think here?

**Kaytee Cobb 40:45**

This one is so interesting to me. It's fun, and it's a really broad range of stuff. I really liked to get these lists of five and see if I can find a three line with Wendy's. Super easy, right? We were like chunky, big world building, mostly fantasy. Easy. We got her picked, right? This one I was like, well, she likes books. That's cool. She likes fiction. Right? So I think both of us are going to agree on this that the first one has to be A Curse So Dark and Lonely by Brigid Kemmerer, because it's such a great series starter, and having it on your TBR but not reading it is kind of a tragedy. And then I'm going to go with Bel Canto. It's an oldie but a goodie. And it was my gateway to Ann Patchett so many years ago, I think it's really unputdownable that one does have a hostage situation. It's court, but mostly it's about group dynamics. So the final spot I'm going to give to Death in the Family by Tessa Wegert because that's going to get her more of that dark murderiness that she kind of got a little bit of taste of in Bel Canto without it being the theme of her reading. What do you have? Okay, I did. Yeah. Okay.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 42:29**

not super, super different. But I have well actually, that's not true. I don't know why I said that. It's completely different. Okay, so we started in the same place agreed, a curse so dark and lonely. Another example, one of my favorite books of all time, I am not accepting criticism on that book. There's a very small number of books on which I will not accept criticism. That is one of them. I love that book. Yes. And I'm bereft that I can't read it again for the first time I say so. Start there, then. Ordinary Monsters by JM Miro is very, very interesting. It's a big book. And it's not at all what I would call a milkshake book. It makes you it's not difficult to understand. But it's got some texture. And some you got to you got to want it. But there's so much to be gained in its pages. And the best thing I can say the best way to describe it would be Did you read? Have you read Ordinary Monsters? So tell me if you think I'm right about this. I think that it is for people who liked or loved Babel and kind of want to be in that posture, that reading posture again, kind of want to be in that world again. But you want more orphans, monsters and magic than we're in Babel. It gave me a lot of Babel vibes. Okay,

**Kaytee Cobb 43:48**

I can see that. It definitely wasn't my favorite. Okay, that's totally fair. And it could be because I wanted it to be more like Babel. Because I had recently finished that one, I think when I picked up Ordinary Monsters, and I wanted that more firmly placed in our world with just a little tweak that more urban fantasy style, or magical realism style, I don't know where we're putting Babel on that spectrum. And this one felt like too many hands in the pot, which is why I didn't love it. But I do agree that it is richly



textured and very dynamic characters that will pull you into the story. I didn't I didn't find it on interesting at all. It just didn't scratch the itch that I wanted at the time that I was reading it

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 44:31

right. And I think for me is I mean, I think you're absolutely right. And it just worked for me that it was more of those things I loved. I loved that will top 10 of the year but it was the way that the dials were tweaked really worked for me in a direction that made me more interested in it. It's got one of the most interesting villains, this guy who turns to dust but this really malevolent dust that is very, very, very interesting. Yeah, so that's what I would put back And then I think just because I, in my own reading, this is what I do. I don't really read book flights in the way that some people talk about book flights, like a few books that really kind of play well together. My books might one book to the next book to the next book, they don't play well together. I like to ping pong. I have a big ping pong thing. So we're sort of dark and broody and moody with Ordinary Monsters. And then Funny You Should Ask, which is actually a rom com that I enjoyed. I'm

**Kaytee Cobb** 45:29

amazed. Yeah. Yeah.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 45:32

So you know, I just think that something totally different. Yeah.

**Kaytee Cobb** 45:36

I mean, those are all very different books. Yeah. But so we're so we're all the rest of you know, like, Sarah, you contain multitudes. You are showing us that in your reading. I like it. Yes. Yeah. We had barely any overlap on that one. I like it that we we can show both sides of that, that we're like, Okay, listen, Wendy, we know what you need. And Sarah, maybe if you're more Meredith reader, you're picking one of these orders. And if you're more Kaytee reader, you're picking the other one or you just read all five eventually. That's great, too.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 46:06

Yeah. I mean, I'm remembering that the reason that I really I really liked Funny You Should Ask, because I didn't so much like the female lead, but I really liked the game Parker, male lead like he was the star. I really liked him. And I thought he was super sexy.

**Kaytee Cobb** 46:21

We all love that of course. Exactly.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 46:24

So yes, read, read what you will. But I would love it. If one of our our bosses let us know what they ended up reading and what they thought about it. That would make me so happy.

**Kaytee Cobb** 46:34

Okay, well, I do have a follow up, actually. So last time we did this one of our boss ease was Jennifer Rose. And she is now a local bookish friend to me. So I know her personally. And I know that she loved

Scythe could not put it down absolutely devoured it, which of course was the one that we put first on her list. And she was so excited to be bossed. And she she did follow our commands. So it went well for us.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 46:59

Excellent. Excellent, good. Well, yes. If you want to be boss, you got to be a bookish friend first. It's

**Kaytee Cobb** 47:04

true. You do. Okay, so now we get to move to the final segment, we're going to the fountain, which is where we get woowo and we make our wishes. Meredith, what are you wishing for this week? Is it well, we

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 47:15

know it's actually very grounded in reality, but I'm so hopeful that we're going to get more of this. I was just so delighted when I thought I was reading a book that I talked about on last week's episode called Cabin in the Woods, Sara Alderson, something like that anywhere. Her name. Her name is Sarah. There's a million cabin in the woods, but I talked about it on last week's show, and I really liked it. But what I loved about the front pieces of that book were that instead of having author blurbs, which we all know all the problems with author blurbs, we all know they included quotes testimonials from blurbs from netgalley readers. And why is this not what every book is doing? Why are those blurbs like Cindy from Net Galley says this was a book I couldn't put down I would so much rather see that because I know that Cindy actually felt that way. Because there's no other profit motive for Cindy to have said that on Net Galley because you can say whatever you want, you don't have to like leave a great review to get okay with books on Net Galley, right? No motive to lie. And so Net Galley blurbs are what I want to see. I want to get rid of author blurbs maybe except in a very few rare and exceptional case exceptional cases, which would then mean that they had some meaning again. So this is my wish, and I wish it ardently fervently This is my wish,

**Kaytee Cobb** 48:43

or to piggyback at the very minimum, give us both so that the reader that cares about Stephen King's choice, which is I'm sure they're out there, they still get a Stephen King blurb, which maybe means that he read it or not. And they also get the one from Cindy on NetGalley. Because sure, you can see who usually matches up with you better. Also, this actually hones in on what we talked about with finding your best recommendation sources. Are you picking books based on an author blurb? And then that doesn't pay off for you? Yeah, it's well, it's useful to track that right. Yeah.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 49:16

The only way that you can really at least for me, the only way that I ever use author blurbs is to get a sense of what kind of book we're talking about here. And even that is not 100% but it gives you a ballpark it gets you in the ballpark. Right. Yeah. So I think they can be useful for that reason, but other than that, there's just way too much backslapping, and favor doing and you know, it just it's not meaningful, but these Net Galley reviews really had me going, You know what, in fact, that was the reason that was that day. That was that book with the pecan bars. Remember I told you this was my friend brought it over and I was like, I don't know. It's coke habit in the woods which irritate He did me

right from the get but then I saw those neck alley reviews and some of them really caught my eye and they were saying things that as a reader were like, Ooh, I like that. So, yeah, I'm really hoping we're gonna see more of it.

**Kaytee Cobb 50:12**

Okay, I like it. Ping splash. Yeah, okay, mine is not dissimilar in that I wish that it were easier to find a fandom recommended reading order for big book universes. So this is a watch that harkens back to our deep dive into Wendy's picks, right, because I mentioned the Sarah J. Maas universe. She has three big series, she has the Throne of Glass series, the Acotar series, and now she has this Crescent City series. But I'm channeling this wish for my friend, Candice, those Sarah J. Maas books all take place in the same universe. So it's really helpful to know how things fit together, it's possible to Google this. But if you don't know how they fit together, it would be great to have that information be more accessible. In the case of Sarah, because we're friends. Now, there's also a tandem read option where you read two of her books concurrently. And you alternate chunks of chapters from one book, and chunks from the other book, because they're basically telling the same story from two different points of view. And so then you're getting both sides of that same story, my wish is that all these different reading options would be easier to find or be collated in one place, just like you have different watching options for the Star Wars universe or the Marvel Universe. I want all that esoteric bookish knowledge to be less esoteric, more accessible, and easy to locate. If this exists, somebody's going to tell me where but maybe in the back of her book, he should say, here's the next book you should read from this series. Because if you're going to jump from one world to the other, and it turns out, they're all connected, you don't want to spoil yourself with Crescent City when you haven't finished acotar, because it turns out, there's stuff going on there that you need to know. And that's my actually,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 51:51**

now that you've said this, I didn't really know because I just finished the Acotar series, I didn't really know that Crescent City was in that same world, the Crescent City seem that the whole series seems really kind of gritty, and in a way than gritty is another word I want to describe my territory Maas reading, right? Let's kind of just you know, but it would seem like on Sarah J. Maas's website should be a place where a lot of that existed, right? Wouldn't that make sense?

**Kaytee Cobb 52:18**

I would think so. And I'm, I'm sure she has said somewhere. But I feel like it should be easier to find. Like, if I am already an Acotar reader, would I like these other series? Or has she written them for a different reader? Right, I want I want to know that. Do I have to be a raving fan girl? Or do I have to just really like resent? Because those are two different answers, right?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:39**

Yeah, no, it's true. I mean, I hate to belabor the point, but again, go follow Holly at BirdBrainbooks because she has really gotten into this issue. If we're talking about just the Sarah J. Maas series, she's really gotten into a lot of that she's a great resource for that, figuring out what order you should read things in. And she's done a lot of like, if you like this, then do it this way. And if you'd like this and do it this way, I think she's laid it out really, really well. She's also done mood boards for a lot of them. And

right now on the hearts and daggers pod, which again, not a sponsor. I don't know why I'm talking about them. So

**Kaytee Cobb** 53:11

we love them. We love them of Holly and Devon.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 53:14

It's fine. You I love them. And so they are doing a kind of deep dive into the Throne of Glass series. And that's also really interesting. I haven't read the Throne of Glass series. I tried Throne of Glass and it just didn't work for me as much. It's not say I won't try it again.

**Kaytee Cobb** 53:32

I got five books in and then I was done. I was over it. Okay, so one of the main characters is named kale. I don't like that at all.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 53:41

Is that better or worse than moth? It's

**Kaytee Cobb** 53:43

better than moth. It's worse than Rhysand And Tamlyn. Yeah.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 53:47

So that's a great wish. I think that that which makes a lot of sense, Kaytee, and those are hopefully a few resources that will help you with it. I mean, the place that would be great to be able to go for all of this would be good reads If Good Reads decided that they cared about being a website that was great for readers. And we all know that they don't correct for reasons none of us can understand, because they make enough money anyways, which is a dumb reason not to be even better to make even more money. All the missed opportunity was good reads drive me crazy.

**Kaytee Cobb** 54:17

You would think all right, And you can find me Kaytee at @notesonbookmarks on Instagram full show

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 54:18

Kaytee, we had a lot of words about a lot of those things. But 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. notes with the title of every book we mentioned in the episode and timestamps. So you can zoom right to where we talked about it can be found on our website at currently reading podcast.com And it's just occurring to me how many books we talked about on this episode and that Megan is going to be rolling her eyes at us. Thank you, Megan. We've talked about a lot of different books,

**Kaytee Cobb** 54:51

please love us. You can also follow the show at @currentlyreadingpodcast on Instagram or email us at currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com And

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 54:59

If you want your TBR boss to become a bookish friend by joining us on Patreon, it's only \$5 a month you get a ton of content and the reading tracker, and you may very well have your TBR bossed. You can also rate and review us on Apple podcasts and shout us out on social media. All three of those things help us to find our perfect audience. Guess

**Kaytee Cobb** 55:22

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

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 55:26

Until next week, may your coffee be hot and your book

**Kaytee Cobb** 55:29

be unputdownable.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 55:30

Happy reading Kaytee

**Kaytee Cobb** 55:32

Happy reading Meredith