



Season 6, Episode 35: Book Subscriptions + Book Wishes to the Book Fairy

Mon, Apr 08, 2024 • 54:05

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:10

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

Kaytee Cobb 00:24

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 love technology that improves my reading life. Me

Kaytee Cobb 00:42

too. I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in Arizona, and I get a big serotonin hit from Book Mail. This is episode number 35 of season six. And we are so glad you're here. All right, we

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:53

are so glad to be here. Kaytee I'm really looking forward to this deep dive that we're going to do later on in the show, because I had no idea about it till I looked at our document, which is the document that just tells me Hey, this is the deep dive for this week. Here it is what spells would the book fairy perform on your books, if you could sort of have any I love this idea. Yes, this

Kaytee Cobb 01:17

came from a Tiktok that one of our bookish friends shared in the bookish friends group. So it's a little bit of a draw from a library, I believe in Michigan that decided to put this spell into action.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:29

I love it. I'm so excited. So that's going to be our deep dive. But first, let's get started the way we always do with our bookish moments of the week. Kaytee, what have you got?

Kaytee Cobb 01:38

All right, Meredith, I have been switching up my book subscription services to try to get my reading dialed back in to where I love getting new books and book mail and whatnot. This week, I got off the waitlist for one called Satisfaction, that's satisfaction but with fiction in the back end. Their focus is on sci fi and fantasy novels all by bipoc authors. And it's coupled with skincare and bath products. There's a book only option as well, but I decided to go all out on this one because it's only bi monthly. So I'm not spending, you know, \$70 a month on a book box. It's only every other month, which I really love. Kind of like spending half that in my girl math brain, much like Fairyloot Illumicrate and Owl Crate their special editions have gorgeous sprayed edges, sign bookplates and then all these delicious self care lotions and candles and face masks and whatnot. Very excited to get back onto this train with a special gift that will show up at my house once every other month with a beautiful book inside and all kinds of other fun goodies and like a treasure trove. So that's satisfaction. I can't wait to report back.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 02:43

Oh, that sounds really really good. I love that I love I think it's smart to take a look at your book subscriptions and say what is really working what's not switch some things around. I think that's a really good idea.

Kaytee Cobb 02:54

What's your bookish moment?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 02:55

my bookish moment has to do with technology. So I have been if you follow me on Instagram, you know that I've been dipping into some watercolor painting. This is something that I've really been enjoying doing. Oftentimes, I will be listening to a podcast or to book at the same time. It's a great way to unwind my brain right now. And what I realized is that when I do that I often sometimes or every once while I'm doing a tutorial. So I wanted to get an iPad, in order to have my tutorials be bigger on the sort of on the table in front of me, I wanted to have a better view of these tutorials. That's why I got the iPad. But lo and behold, my bookish brain ended up glomming on to this iPad for a bunch of bookish reasons. And being like actually, this is kind of really, really great. So it turns out that I love a lot about reading using the Kindle app on an iPad. Now, this isn't new. A lot of people have been doing this for a really long time, big downside. It's heavy. And while I was able to get a cover that has some of the same kind of benefits, including like the backhand strap, it's heavy, the reality is compared to a Kindle, the iPad is heavy, so it's not going to take over it's not going to make me not use my Kindle. Let me put it that way. Because there are just a lot of times where the Kindle is a lot better. But with the iPad, the Kindle app on the iPad, I like the fact that you can change the undertone. I like the fact that you have a lot of font options. And I really like annotating on the iPad because you can highlight in multiple different colors and you can make notes in different ways. I actually think the next time I get ready for the next episode of Journey to Three Pines. I'm going to do it on my Kindle because there's a lot of different ways to flag and highlight and annotate that aren't available to me on Wait, did I just say I was gonna do it on my Kindle. I'm going to do it on my iPad. Because on a Kindle, the a lot of those things aren't available. One big upside and also big downside equally is that I can flip over to Goodreads super easily. And I can do a quick Google search about whatever I'm wanting to search on if I'm reading. And that's also a downside because I can do all those things, and it's distracting. But the biggest thing that I love is

Whisper sync. I love the ability. So you guys know I'm reading I have the world, I'm doing it as a tandem read. So both reading and listening at the same time, on an iPad, it all happens together. Right? If you've bought the audiobook, and you have the Kindle version, it reads to you and highlights the word not like I need that. But it's just it turns the pages for you. You can adjust the narration to whatever speed you want, just like on any other audio version of it. And it's just all done together. And it all goes to where the last point of my reading on my phone and on my Kindle, it just all works together. I really, really like it. So that that is why the iPad for all things reading has become my favorite new thing, again, not taking the place of my Kindle Oasis at all. But just it has found a new special place in my reading.

Kaytee Cobb 06:11

Okay, okay, I have to ask because one of my favorite things about my Kindle is the non glare screen. So you can take it outside and you don't have the sun blinding you. I'm guessing that you're not taking your iPad outside to read.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:26

So I actually have been taking it outside to read I just created a new reading area in my backyard. I got rid of my dining table because I realized I don't like to eat outside. Yeah, so I got rid of the dining table that was under my pergola and put in a huge sectional and so it's gonna get so much more use. And I took the iPad out there, if I'm sitting in the shade, which is of course what I'm doing when I'm doing that kind of reading, it's perfectly fine. If I was wanting to be out in the direct sun to get, you know, some sun or or sunbather, whatever, I would either need to take my Kindle or just do it on audio. Because yes, the glare is an issue on an iPad. But then also you get to see your covers in all their beautiful color. And there's something to be said for that. So, bunch of upsides, bunch of downsides. It's just one tool in our readerly toolbox. It's not nothing is ever going to be everything when that'd be great. Yeah, well, we'll talk in our deep dive about some ways that a book fairy could make something everything.

Kaytee Cobb 07:28

Come on book fairy make it happen. Exactly. All

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:31

right, Kaytee let's get into our current reads. What's your first book you're bringing? Okay,

Kaytee Cobb 07:35

Meredith, my first one has a beautiful cover. So maybe it would be good to read on an iPad instead of a Kindle. I'm going to talk about Betty by Tiffany McDaniel. So this was an indie press list book from our February store, which was Booktenders in West Virginia. Now, Booktenders surprised us on pretty much every level throughout that list. So don't be surprised if you hear a few more from that list show up on the podcast. But this one was the first one I finished and the one that most shocked me to fall so hard for. I wanted to talk about it. I had heard of Betty Of course, we all saw it in bookstores and online when we couldn't leave our houses because it released in August of 2020 when we had nothing going on, but many of us or no, I'm probably just speaking for me. I didn't want to read something difficult, or lengthy or hard. The world was hard enough. So I avoided it. wholecloth I noticed that it had a beautiful cover, and that I saw good reviews. And I said that's not a book for me. That's okay. Bye bye, Betty. Right. That's what we're three and a half years to Booktenders in West Virginia. This little bookstore

that could know their audience and know their location in the Appalachians and gave us a super special stack of books. That stack included *Betty*, which I still had filed in the not-for-Kaytee part of my brain. So I was going to read the 10 to 20% from my pre-read and get a feel for it and then move right along. But that's not what happened. This book begins with a girl comes of age against the knife. She must learn to bear its blade to be cut to bleed to scar over and still somehow be beautiful, and with good enough knees to take the sponge to the kitchen floor every Saturday. *Betty*, our titular character is born in a bathtub in 1954 to a white mother and a Cherokee father. She is the sixth of eight siblings, not all of whom survive their first year. *Betty* is also the author's mother. This novel is historical fiction about family and siblings and poverty and hard. It's also beautiful. The rolling hills of purple mountains majesty on the cover of this book capture you completely and the reader is transported into the landscape of dark skies with bright stars wild fruit and fields of wildflowers. This landscape becomes a kind of refuge for *Betty*. But when her family's darkest secrets are brought to light she has no choice but to reckon with the brutal history hiding in the hills, as well as the heart-wrenching cruelties and incredible characters that she encounters. *Betty*'s story is one of resilience and curiosity. She is propelled by the love of her family. The way her Cherokee Father teaches His own love of the land. And of the women who raised him, she finds her voice by writing her own stories down. And lucky she did, because Tiffany McDaniel introduces us to the generations of her family through her mother in this stunning novel. Of course, I didn't say any time in that I was wrong and this novel was in fact, only 250 pages and a light romp. I was not wrong about that. It's large. And it's difficult, but I was wrong about being able to read it and fall in love with it. I was wrong about thinking it wasn't a book for me. Or maybe I'm a different reader now than I was four years ago. Because this was a book for me. I finished it almost two months ago now and this story has continued to stick with me. I continue to think about *Betty* and what she might be up to now. Not a spoiler she's still alive. You can see her on the author's Instagram account. I love getting a little deeper into the story by going over there on Tiffany McDaniels account to see family photos of *Betty* over the years. If you like me avoided this one in 2020 Maybe 2024 you is ready to read it. This is *Betty* by Tiffany McDaniel. I could not agree more. Kaytee, this was one that really surprised me. I'd been hearing about this book as one of the favorites of my friend Gloria Acosta for the whole previous year. She read that book and it just blew her out. She just absolutely loved it. So I'd been hearing a lot about it. But right I thought too dark. I just I love that book. I really, really did. That's it. I agree. I hope that 2024 readers will be able to find something there when we maybe we're not ready for that level of gravity that's in that book in 2020.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 11:14

Definitely. All right, Kaytee, we are starting off my books with a bang talking about books that absolutely just knocked us over and indie press list books because I also am bringing indie press list book this one from *An Unlikely Story*. This is *The Tainted Cup* by Robert Jackson Bennett. I could not wait any longer to bring it one of my top 10 books of the year if not number one. I love this book. I love it so much. Okay, our story. Here's the setup. Our story takes us this is fantasy police procedural so we are in a fantasy kind of setting here and the place we where we are is called dar tanah. And in one of the biggest mansions in Darsana. A high Imperial officer is dead. He's been killed, and this is my favorite part. When a tree erupted from his body, the Empire assigns detective Anna De La Habra to investigate. Anna is known as the best detective that they have. But she comes with some serious eccentricities. Like all good detectives who are brilliant do right. Like for example, she wears a blindfold most of the time even though she does not need to. She just thinks that it enhances her other senses. Anna is

brilliant, but seriously odd. So thankfully, she has her brand new assistant Dennis Cole to help her. Dennis has been magically altered specifically so that he will be a perfect right hand man to Anna. He can remember everything he sees and hears in exact detail and to the to investigate this murder and some other seriously gory stuff that happens and they close in on kind of who did it and they uncover a scheme that threatens the Empire itself. And they're trying to work to do all of this puzzle solving and murder solving and bad guy getting while also the land that they live in is being very, very threatened by leviathans. I cannot tell you how much I love this book. This, as I said was recommended to us on the indie press list by An Unlikely Story and book boyfriend Bill. But I will say that months before that it had been on my radar, because my good friend and number one recommendation source Elizabeth Barnhill had said Meredith, I think the lab came up with the perfect book for you. And boy, was she right. It is absolutely perfect. For my particular reading tastes. This is first and foremost and you need to know this. This is a murder mystery in a lot of ways. You could very fairly call this a police procedural and you'd be absolutely right. It's got all the ingredients. It's got a murder. It's got a very, very gory murder. It's got investigators. It's got a duo of investigators that are absolutely perfect together and we see the full investigation through their eyes. We walk side by side as they investigate every twist and turn of this absolutely amazingly well. Well applauded mystery. But what makes it really awesome is that it takes place in a world where as I said, leviathans threaten the border of this country, and magical constructs about this world has a very specific agricultural and floral magic constructs. And it makes the investigation and the mystery itself so much more interesting. This book also has a society of people, many of whom have been augmented in really interesting ways. Like the way that the author came up with. This was very, very interesting, because there's not they're not wasted that you've seen before. It's not like they're, like flying or telepathic. Although there are people who do that. They are augmented in ways that help them benefit the Empire at large. The social construct here is almost as interesting as the magical construct. But let us return to the fact that I am saying, do not forget that this is a murder mystery at its heart. We have very well connected characters and an interesting world. But we have also violent, gory murder, all throughout this book, this book is not for HSPs. But if you love a great murder mystery, you are going to love this book. This was a full five stars for me. And I loved it so much that I was so sad when it ended. And you can bet your last bitty bit that if there is another book in the series, and it looks like there might be I am going to be so excited to get back into this world and solve another mystery with these characters. This is *The Tainted Cup* by Robert Jackson Bennett. And I think everyone will love it. Except HSPs. Because it's very gory, true. I can cosign for what I've read everything on there. This one is still on my currently reading stack. As an I did my pre read, but it's on the shelf. It's ready for me. I think I'm gonna pick it up in October. And I think it's worth noting that it is a jacketless hardback jacketless. Yeah. So it's an it's beautiful. So it's worth picking up the hardcopy, it's really, it's really beautifully done has maps on it has all kinds of great stuff. Yes. And you know, as with a lot of books like this, you need to give it a full two chapters to really allow yourself to get into the world. There isn't a ton of world building. But there is some because we are in a world that's not like our own. So give it the first couple of chapters, and then see what you're thinking. But oh, I Kaytee, when we were together at our reading retreat, I could not stop talking about this book. It was all I wanted to do was read it. I read it on the plane there. I read it on the plane back. I was so bummed when it was over this book is just my favorite kind of reading experience. I loved it so good.

Kaytee Cobb 17:53

Okay, my second one this week is nonfiction. It's memoir. It's Leslie effing Jones by Leslie Jones. The effing is the longer version of that word. It still does have an asterisk in there, but we're keeping it PG here. This is memoir. The audio is read by the author. So of course I consumed it that way. Let me tell you about it. Leslie Jones is so well known now after she rocketed to stardom on Saturday live in the 40th season starting in 2013. She was brought on specifically because Lorne Michaels wanted to add a Black woman to the show and Chris Rock knew Leslie Jones personally. So he pushed her to the top of the shortlist. This book, released in 2023, details the work it took Jones to get to that point and what has come afterwards. Leslie as with many of the comedians we know and love has a lot of really difficult stuff in her background. Sexual assault and trauma make frequent appearances in these pages add to that the racism that comes toward way too many Black women especially as well as struggles with depression, and this book really brings you through it. But it's also told her voice with her trademark wit. And it is hilarious. I often laughed all the way out loud at the park with my children with all the F words in my ears, crying, laughing tears streaming down my face like a crazy person. She details her entire career, including winning the funniest person on campus award and college. Her very first stand up sets the ways her career changed when she moved from California to New York and how she honed her craft. She discusses the perils of being cast as an angry Black woman. And as someone with a big voice, who is six feet tall, it's something she's had to fight against for her whole career. This audio book, though, is truly unique. And I'd like to talk a little bit about that. The paper book is 288 pages, which is not long. However, the audio book is 16 and a half hours long. Normally 288 pages you could read that in five to six hours even for a regular slowish audiobook narrator This is almost three times that length. That's because Leslie must've had her book in front of her to read from. But she also tell stories and adds notes and gets into the weeds and stories like I'm sure is not happening in the printed text. She's overcome by emotion a number of times. And just like I mentioned long ago with I Take My Coffee Black by Tyler Merritt. Those portions are not edited out, the producers don't have her retake the parts of the book where she audibly breaks down in tears. You can hear her cry while she talks about the death of her family members. When she talks about some of the heart she's experienced. The entire production is really visceral, even when you're thinking, Oh, great look, a book by a comedian. Hurray. It's not that. So I do want to make it really clear that this memoir is not a romp of nonstop laughs even though I did laugh until I cried. Of course, there are books like that by comedians like Food, A Love Story by Jim Gaffigan. But this one is much more in depth and personal. If you want the tightly edited story of her life, the printed book is probably the way to go. But if you want her to take you on a journey in person, you have to grab the audiobook of this one. And even though it's long, it's so fun, despite all the other words I used in this review, to get to hear her tell her story. In her own words. This was a delight. Even though that seems like a conundrum that I've presented to you. It's Lesley effing Jones by Leslie Jones.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 21:25

I love that that was actually one of the books that I was very close to asking you to talk about when we were last week when we were choosing books on the no prep episode. But yeah, because oftentimes, we find that memoirs by comedians are some of the most like fraught with trauma, right? That's how they got serious to be as amazing as they are.

Kaytee Cobb 21:46

I talked about this with my kids when I read them, *Born a Crime* The young readers version by Trevor Noah, because he's hilarious, right. But there's a lot of hard stuff in his family past as well. And so the kids, for them, that was the first time they were introduced to this idea of having been through something hard making you into a person that is very funny, and how comedians make that transition from the one to the other. And of course, that doesn't happen for everybody. A lot of people go through really hard stuff and they don't become comedians. But yeah, I feel like really good. Comedians, a lot of times have some of that in their story.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 22:18

Yeah, it makes me think of one of my favorite books of all time, which is *Rabbit* by a black female comedian, Miss Pat, and a lot of the same things apply to that were two really, really, really hard story and yet I was laughing like until I cried. Yeah, so yeah, so good. Okay. All right, Kaytee. Well, my second one, the second spot is the down spot this time because I had to bring a book that I had high hopes for, but did not work for me. This is *The Gathering* by CJ Tudor. Here's the setup. Our story takes place in a small Alaskan town in the city of dead heart to be exact. A terrible crime has just been discovered, right. As our story opens, a teenage boy is found with his throat ripped out and all the blood drained from his body. Okay, so we already know kind of where we are right? Well, you think that the town would be abuzz with the mystery of who could possibly have committed a crime like this, but they're not because they know who's responsible, or at least they think they do. It's got to be a member of the Colony, capital C, and ostracized community of vampires that live deep in the nearby woods. Our lead character is Detective Barbara Atkins, and she specializes in vampire killings. And in fact, she is called in by the government to determine if this is truly a Colony, capital C killing. And if it is, it will be her decision to authorize a coal meaning she makes it okay for the vampires to be killed. But the thing is, Detective Atkins sees several things that give her pause. And she's not sure that this truly is a colony killing. So Atkins weighs into the crime scene, and deeply into the long held simmering tensions between the humans and the vampires. And she alone is determined to find the truth. So from that setup, you would know that I was really really, really hoping to like this one. It has a winter setting and a really interesting premise. Also, I loved CJ Tudor's, books, *The Chalk Man*, and especially *The Drift*. I loved *The Drift*. I was hoping that this new book which comes out, I think tomorrow would be more like *The Drift*. And there's no question that it's an interesting concept, a police procedural that also deals with a world where vampires are real and studied as a species and that there are laws to protect them and their lands. Right. That's interesting. I love that concept. And there were several things throughout the book that were interesting around that concept. I also loved a lot of the characters and the character development in this book, Barbara Atkins, the lead detective comes in and has to figure out what's going on. She is a really quality lead detective. In the story, she's smart and normal, and she takes her job really seriously. That normal part really grounds the book in an important way. There's also another character that comes into play in an important way, a retired police chief named Tucker, who I kept in my mind was Tyler Merritt from *I'll Take My Coffee Black*, that you just mentioned, I just had him in my mind. So that was an interaction between her and that retired sheriff who now has become a kind of a hermit. I like that. So those are the things that worked for me. But again, here we get an issue of pacing, which is something that I seem to be having tremendous trouble finding done well, in new books coming out in 2024. There were things here that were interesting, but were only mildly interesting. And then there were things that were happening. But then there would be long periods of

time, we're just not much moved forward in the story. There's just so many times we can all walk around and be upset about this kid who was drained of blood. It's so frustrating to me. And I'm starting to question whether or not the problem is me, because it's happened in so many books that I've read recently. But I pushed through till the end, and it had a reasonably satisfying ending. Overall, I'm only going to give this one 3.25 stars, I would definitely recommend it to anyone who really has always wondered what a world might look like if vampires were treated as a normal part of society. I feel like maybe well, she was CJ Tudor was trying to give us a metaphor for Indigenous people. And I think done well, that would have been really effective. But here I kept grasping for the metaphor and just not able to find it. So I'll continue to read books by this author, but with a little more of a sense of weariness than I had before. This is *The Gathering* by CJ Tudor.

Kaytee Cobb 26:42

I have for my third book, something that did not disappoint from an author that I've read before. Good. I'm gonna talk about *Wolfsong* by TJ Klune. The Tucson Festival of Books really messed with my reading for a few weeks. And this is one of the ways that it did. So we are talking prime book hangover territory for me. I picked up this 500 Page werewolf book by an author that made me hug books in the past and go off, and I knew it was going to be totally different. I finished it in two days, and it's now imprinted on me like a baby wolf with its mother. Here's the setup. Ox is our main character. His full name is Oxnard. But thankfully, nobody calls him that. He's a big, broad man, even when he's young. So everyone calls him ox. And our opening scene. Ox is 12 years old, and his father is leaving him and his mother, never to return. He tells ox that he's stupid. He's going to be treated like garbage his whole life because he doesn't deserve anything better than that. He also lets him know that real men don't cry so you better get over it real quick. Ox and his mom have to make do. He starts working at the auto shop in town taking over the job. His dad left getting paid under the table because he's only 12 years old, but he knows cars inside and out. A few years later, he meets Joe, a kid down the road who just moved into the big house that's been abandoned for years. He has a tight knit large family, the kind of family that ox has never had and has never even thought to dream of this family is physically affectionate wears their hearts on their sleeves. They eat together and run together and seem to know each other's thoughts. About a year later, ox finds out Joe's secret, as well as that of his family. And as you might expect, it changes everything. Not a spoiler The book is called *wolf song* has a wolf on the cover. And I didn't mention werewolves. I want to make it super duper duper duper clear that this book is only for adult readers, preferably ones who like their narratives dark with a side of gore. This is not the YA superhero series that TJ Klune writes called *Extraordinaries*. It's also not the cozy fantasy sweetness of *The House in the Cerulean Sea* or *Under the Whispering Door*. There are instead pools of blood in this book, there are heads being removed from bodies. There's also lust and desire and some pretty graphic sexy times between two adult men. And that's something else that needs to be addressed right here in my review, because it seems to really throw some people in their own reviews. There's an age gap here that bothers some readers. It's important to know that going in and also know that TJ Klune addresses it and there's never anything untoward happening with a child or children. I am not recommending any books that include pedophilia here, but I am recommending this book wholeheartedly. I finished this story and texted my reading buddies and told them I am forever changed. I am now part wolf myself. I'm part of a pack of wolves and I'm going feral myself. It was such a well written story and had me gripped from start to finish. I devoured this one bones and all fur and all with giant wolf teeth because I could not put it down. This book was originally purchased by a publisher that

did wrong by the author by TJ So he bought the rights back. And then self published these novels. The ones we can buy now are published by Tor. And that's a whole mess that I want to do more research on and then discuss with Bhumi. Probably on from the editor's desk. But basically, we can call these books a la Taylor Swift TJs version, they are beautiful hardcovers, sometimes they have lovely sprayed edges. And all this is to say go by TJs version of the wolf song series, dive deep into this world of wolves with me and emerge ever changed. Message me when you read them, I will take your direct messages. I want to know all the things I want to know what kinds of feelings it evokes. And when you cry, and when you have your heart ripped out. And when he sews it all back together for you, in the best, most wonderful way. I loved this book so much, and I just did not expect it. Because I already knew I loved TJ Klune. So why did I need anything different than what he had already given me? It turns out I did. And I adored it. It's Wolfsong by TJ Klune. Good for

Meredith Monday Schwartz 31:04

him for releasing a book that is totally different than what he's become like he really has become known for a very specific kind of book. Right? Very cozy, very heartwarming, very poignant. Good for him for putting out something that shows he can do a lot of different things. I love that.

Kaytee Cobb 31:21

Definitely. Yeah, I love it, too. That is so good. Okay, well, I

Meredith Monday Schwartz 31:25

also have another book here that I absolutely loved. And this is a book that for me imprinted in a weird way that I just totally wasn't expecting. This is The Force of Such Beauty by Barbara Bourland. Did you ever read this book at? No,

Kaytee Cobb 31:39

I don't think I've ever even heard of this book.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 31:41

All right. Well, it doesn't have a lot of goodread right goodreads reviews. So maybe it hasn't been everywhere. But in this case, and you guys know, we always tell you this when we're going to do this, I'm going to leave the marketing blurb alone because I really liked it and it was what sucked part of what sucked me in one sunny day in an idyllic kingdom by the sea. A princess named Caroline pretends to sleep when her keepers strike up a card game, Caroline sneaks into her maids car, turns the key and drives right out of the palace alone for the first time in years. She gets on the next flight, only to land in the waiting arms of her guards. As she's forcibly escorted back to her marble prison. Something in Caroline breaks for good. It's not her first failed attempt and it won't be her last. Carolyn suspects that she'll never escape. But she might find a way to be free. All right. I think that's a pretty good marketing blurb in a world of crappy marketing blurbs, right? Of course, I started reading this book, because I had gone down the rabbit hole along with everyone else about what was happening with poor Kate Middleton. Now as of this recording, we know and we wish her a swift and complete recovery. I had gone down this rabbit hole and many conspiracy theories wondering exactly what life might be like for a woman who marries into a royal family. And of course, I now feel terrible that I went through so many conspiracy theories. But when I heard Tina from TBR, etcetera, mentioned this book, I

remembered that I had an argument and I pulled it off my shelves immediately. Kaytee, remember how we talked about a book sitting on our shelves for a long time and you pull it off? And you're like, Where have you been on my life? It's been winking at you, because it winked at you? Yep, did it this, this was totally that. So this is where I stop and say once again, how important expectations are when we go into a book. I knew that the subject matter was something that I was very interested in. I'm fascinated by the concept of a modern woman, like Megan Markle, for example, marrying into a royal family, and her own expectations versus what actually happens, versus the way that everything looks on the outside, to the press, and the public. All of that is immensely interesting to me. What I wasn't expecting was for this book to be as well written as it was, I think there was some part of me that thought it was going to be some kind of early 20s woman telling us about her experiences as a princess. That is not what we get here. Everything we're getting here is from the lens of a grown woman. She is a woman who sees her young self, her fairly naive, young self really clearly, and then also has all of the lived experience to give context to the circumstances and the actions of the people around her. I think it was that aspect of things. The quality of this novel matched with the propulsiveness of this feeling of looking behind the scenes behind closed doors that all of us royal watchers think about all the time. This book gives you the feeling that you might actually know what Kate Middleton's real life might be like. We can't know for sure, but let's just say a lot of things here ring true. So I inhaled this book, I think I sat for more than two hours on two occasions. And I just put my headphones in with pink noise in them, and found myself in this small European principality with all of its beauty, and all of its intrigue, all of the romance between the prince and princess and their relationship, and all of the circumstances of its undoing. Every bit of it went down like the best kind of milkshake book, only then you find out that when the milkshake is gone, it was actually good for you. I loved this book, I'm so glad I read it. And if you aren't interested in the Royals in any way, shape, or form, you should pick it up too. This is *The Force of Such Beauty* by Barbara Bourland. And by the way, the title, it's in the book in a way that has forever seared it into my brain. And that is exactly what titles are supposed to do. It is so good. I loved this book. sounds excellent. Such a good one. Alright Kaytee. We talked today about several books that we really, really liked. Yes, we did. And in the real world, it is kind of the luck of the draw that we find a book that we really love. But if we had something like a book fairy, what might our reading life be able to be like? This is the question that's on the table today for us. So Kaytee, I got to know what was the first thing that you thought if there was a book fairy, I would ask her to x, what would you ever do? And I wonder, I think it's gonna be the same thing that my first one was? Well,

Kaytee Cobb 36:35

the first one I thought of probably is the same thing that your first one is, but the one I want to talk about first. Is that all closed door romances would have the door open for me. Okay,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 36:51

okay. All right. I love it.

Kaytee Cobb 36:53

I get so disappointed when I find out that I accidentally read a closed door romance. So if I could have just come over and like seeing now your book is exactly the way you wanted it to be. That's what that's one of the first things that I would change. Hey,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:09

that's perfect. That's exactly what we're talking about. What are the things that would really make you enjoy a book more? My first thought was, every book would have a map. Yes. And that map would be able to be pinched up as much as you want to pinch it so that you can get closer and closer and closer to wherever on the map you want to live will map this. Yes, a zoomable pinchy. Big map that would be like, let's say it's a book that includes an ocean, well, you would be able to pinch, pinch, pinch it bigger, bigger, bigger, and you could maybe even see the fish in the water. Or maybe it's a book with a sea creature, you'd be able to see the tip of Tritons..... Trident. That

Kaytee Cobb 37:55

was like what, what are we looking at of Tritons?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:57

Do you know what I mean? No, Kaytee, I know ATM, I meant his weapon. Whenever it's a trident. That's the tip of the thing that I want to see. Or you go to another part of the map and you can pinch it up so that you can see into the windows of the house that you're looking at. This is magic, this is where the fairy, okay? It's totally based in magic, this would never happen in real life. These aren't wishes they are. This is a book fairies, like magic thing. So maps that are zoomable, that would be my first test, every book, every book,

Kaytee Cobb 38:36

I love that. And I did have a few ideas that were kind of structural like that as well. I want a yearbook, either at the beginning or end of the book that has the faces of the characters, for those of us that do not have good imaginations to be able to look at the face of that person. And it's magic. So that face can be you know, if if the author describes it as the most attractive person in the world exactly matches you as the reader, the most attractive person in the world, like if it fixes itself to be your taste. And then you can flip and be like, Oh, I just want to remember what that person looked like, again, or that winged man that I was reading about, or whatever it is, you can flip back and say, Uh huh, yeah, that's just wanted to check in. Just wanted to make sure that I still remembered exactly what His face looked like. I need to,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:29

but wait, wait, what if, in addition to that, what if you could press a button or snap your fingers and whatever character is being discussed in that moment of what you're reading? Kind of like a small holographic version of it comes and sits on the edge of the book

Kaytee Cobb 39:49

helped me Obi Wan. You're my only hope.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:51

Exactly. Right. Or like Harry Potter. You know, like how the newspapers like people will wave from the newspaper or whatever. Like a little holographic Rhys from A Court of Thorns and Roses will come and sit on the top with all of his winged majesty right up there. That would really, that would be helpful. Yeah,

Kaytee Cobb 40:09

I like that idea. Okay, kind of flipside of My first wish, I would like anything that is considered ya to be closed door and door, I would like to be able to push the closed door button. So I know that I can let my 13 year old read whatever. And not because I'm worried about him reading sex, I don't care. But he's like, there's not gonna be something gross in here. Is there? Like he's just not into it, which is fine. He's 13. And I just would like to be like, Yep, here, I'm just gonna push this little button, and it makes little post it notes that cover any scenes that you probably want to skip as a 13 year old boy. Like I just just that little click of the closed door button for ya or below. I mean, not that there's a lot of middle grade books with graphic sex scenes in them. Yeah,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 40:57

right. But then No, that's, that's a great idea. I would love it. If at any point, I could press on a word or a character's name. And the perfect pronunciation would come out. And I would immediately I would immediately know that. I would love

Kaytee Cobb 41:13

that. Yes, yes. Why doesn't that exist?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 41:16

I mean, I feel like that is within the realm of technological ability, like certainly on an e reader. With Whispersync. Yeah, yeah, you could definitely do that. But I love that idea. Also, I really like family trees. So I would like there to be an interactive family tree in every book that has a family of any way, shape or form. I would like to have that at the beginning. Yes,

Kaytee Cobb 41:42

I like that plan, too. With regard to sci fi, I would like sci fi to never make me feel stupid. So I want the author to make their books interesting, and brainy and sciency. Without it being like, you're too dumb to understand this, Kaytee. I don't feel like I'm a dumb reader. But every once awhile that happens, and I'm like, I don't know, this person is smarter than me. I don't, I don't really like it. And so that is what my other my book fairy would do that for me. Make all sci fi accessible.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 42:14

Okay, that's good. I along those same lines, there's a point in most mysteries where I think I have at least a strong guess as to what's actually happening or who the murderer is, I would like to be able to press a button at that point, in my reading, convey my thoughts. At the end of the book, I would like to be able to press another button where the book fairy herself would be able to say, this is what you thought, and this is how right you were or how wrong you were. And we would just be able to have a little discussion. But especially if I was right, she would just pop up. And there would be so much glitter from her one that would say you were right. I would love that. You are the smartest only 10% of people. Yes,

Kaytee Cobb 43:00

definitely get a grade on you're guessing I like that idea a lot. Yes, I love it. Okay, a little bit more, maybe not practical, because it's still not going to happen. But I would like a fast forward button for mushy middles. So that when we get to the point where the author is just kind of spinning a little bit, we could it could even be like page feel where you can kind of slide your thumb along the page until it turns to a different texture. And you can just skip that whole section and get right back into the action I that mushy middle skip is something I would really appreciate in my reading life.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:34

That's a great idea that would help with all of my pacing problems that I continue to struggle so mightily with. I again, as a resident mystery reader, I would love it if there was some sort of timeline feature. So whether that looks like me circling something and being able to sort of like, add it to a timeline, or the the book itself being me being able to say like, show me the timeline up to this point. I don't know exactly how that would work. But some sort of timeline feature, a lot of mysteries that I read are very, like, I need to be able to be like, Okay, so this person last saw them at 9:08pm. And the last voicemail that they left was 1102. And then when their body was discovered was at two in the morning. So then like I need to like have it in my mind all the time. Like, right, we're talking about between 1102 and two in the morning. I think there are other pieces I would want. Like I'm imagining kind of Minority Report style, this would all be able to come up on top of my books so that I can be like okay, yeah, no, move that suspect away. Yeah, no, I don't you know, or like she was here at this point, that kind of thing. I would love to be able to interact with my mysteries that way. Yeah,

Kaytee Cobb 44:44

it's like, it's like a bulletin board cork board where you've got all the things pinned up with the red string from the location to the time spot to the right person's face. And you can get visualize all those clues on the detective work board or whatever those are Things are called

Meredith Monday Schwartz 45:00

it right usually a dry erase board that they're putting stuff on. But

Kaytee Cobb 45:04

like now I want you to find with the printed photos on the red and the red string. Well, so

Meredith Monday Schwartz 45:08

yeah, but you they do tend to still do that on dry erase board and and they write like underneath them. Yeah. Have you never seen like Vera? Like

Kaytee Cobb 45:15

never seen Vera? Okay, well, I guess I'm picturing the ones from the 80s with the with the corkboard where you stick a pin in somebody's picture, stick it to the board. Well, the pin

Meredith Monday Schwartz 45:26

actually gets me to my next thing, which is automated maps. Because a lot of times in the books that I read, I need to be able to be like, Okay, so this person was here. And this person was here, kind of like

the Marauders Map in here. Yeah, with the footprints where you can see where everybody is, at one end a different time. Yes, I love it. Yeah,

Kaytee Cobb 45:46

I like that idea a lot too. Okay, for for literary fiction, I'm going to make a wish that I can flip to one more page and everybody gets a happy ending like that. There's always the like, the suckers way out version, where you don't have to be stuck in like the sad and the desolate, just because it's a literary fiction book. They're like, Oh, and for all of the rest of you who hate this type of ending. Here you go. Here's the extra page just for you. That's what I want.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:14

I like it. I like it. I also my final two are sort of related to each other. The first one is, I would like my book fairy to be with me as I open up a book and for her to be sort of like on my shoulder and be like, yeah, no, it's not the right time for this one. Don't even waste your time on it. Nope, nope, nope. Not the right time for that one, or Yes, this one will work perfectly for you. You can begin that in earnest. Just a little more guidance in my book choices would be great.

Kaytee Cobb 46:44

No. And I think she should also have the ability to add, you're probably going to want to read at least five more pages before you make that decision. Because yeah, that's the problem with DNF being right, you always want to know, is there something just around the corner that's going to change my mind that that DNF book fairy could say that and say, okay, but just make sure you made it to page 26 Before you decide. I'm not saying anything, but except get to page 26. And then you can make an informed DNF decision. Yes,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:13

absolutely. I love I love that. Then my final one is just that my book fairy would create kind of a bookish Room of Requirement for me. I realize a lot of my wishes now have come from Harry Potter. Right? I did not do that on purpose. I guess the hotel Deucalion? Yeah, exactly. A Room of Requirement. Meaning when I walk into it, it has the exact right seating situation. It's giving me the exact right book. It's the right temperature in the room, I've got the right snack or not. I've got all my all the other things that we've talked about that the book fairy would give us would be available, the right music or sound or ASMR room would be playing. I wouldn't have to do anything other than walk into the room. Yes, that would be perfect.

Kaytee Cobb 48:02

Yes, the book fairy waved her wand. When you say when you say to your family, or you get off the phone and you say okay, I'm gonna go read now. It just poof, it's ready for you. All those things have been arranged. And you don't have to spend 15 minutes of your 30 minutes that you've allotted. Getting it ready to read. That would be ideal. Definitely written

Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:23

this. Oh, let's see ultimate. Yeah, that

Kaytee Cobb 48:26

really is. That's the best wish, because then all the other ones seem possible.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:30

Exact. Right, exactly. It's a fun game to play. And we would love to know, we would love to know, what are the things that you would ask your book fairy for because every book fairy is made for every reader. So this book fairy, yours is going to know exactly what you want and have completely different abilities than mine would be or Kaytee's than yours would be. So let us know we'll put up a social post. Let us know the answer to this question. I would be fascinated.

Kaytee Cobb 49:00

Yes. I can't wait to hear

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:01

all right, Kaytee, it is very close. We're gonna do we're not doing fairies but we're doing some wishes. Kaytee, what is your wish at the fountain this week?

Kaytee Cobb 49:11

Okay, I'm gonna perform a little magic here and tell you my wish, which is definitely not bookish, but I'm going to try and turn it bookish. So my wish this week is for everyone to follow @weeklyhomecheck on Instagram. So this is home related, but stick with me. I can turn anything bookish. This account weekly home check is run by a lovely man named Kyshawn, who gives us a weekly reminder for homes we own or rent of the things we can and should be paying attention to around our homes. His videos are simple. His voice is very soothing and lovely. And I may have watched all of them too many times. Here's what makes this bookish I can get his emails or watch his videos. I put the task of the week on my to do list get it done. Check it off, and then I stop wasting my brain space wondering what's gonna break next in my house because it's already checked out. If instead I spend that time completing the task with a great audiobook or podcast, and I can dedicate the freed brain space to my fictional characters, of course, I'd also love Kyshawn or anybody else to send me a weekly reading checklist, not a weekly home check a weekly reading check something like, it's week 14 of 2024. Remember to give a reading recommendation to someone you love. And then I can check it off task complete, and devote that brain space to fictional characters. That is my wish this week. pings blush. Yes,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 50:32

He is a great follow. I enjoy him very much too. All right, my wish is that everyone would listen to a podcast, which is The Canada Reads podcast. I really, really love what they do over a Canada reads. And they just did it for this year, which is why it's top of mind for me. And you can go listen to this in podcast form. They basically have five books that are championed by five different members of Canadian society, not authors. They're not the authors of the books. They're like an actor of volleyball player of you know, the mayor of Calgary. Yeah, exactly. And they are the each one of those people is tasked with championing one Canadian book. And the way that they do it, then is in an hour they, the host asked some really good bookish questions about their books, they can talk about their book, they talk about each other's books. Every episode, I think there are four episodes every at the end of every one, one book is eliminated until of course there is the one book that everyone in Canada should read.

Now, it is a fascinating format, it moves very, very quickly. Like really, honestly, there'll be like, Okay, everyone has 30 seconds to answer this question. And the host keeps them on time. Like that show really moves at a great clip. And it is so enjoyable, because these are regular people talking about books, and it's helping me do more of what I'm wanting to do, which is to think about books critically, instead of just thinking about them in terms of did I like it or not, this is a really big top of mine thing for me. And the Canada reads podcast does a great job of putting this together in a format that I think is just incredibly incredibly listened double. So we will put this in our show notes, but I highly recommend and I wish that you would give a try to episode one of this year's can do reads and then if you like it, you can do what I'm doing and go back many years in the podcast and listen, because if you haven't read that book, it's new to you,

Kaytee Cobb 52:37

right? And all those books are backlist. Now, all those

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:41

books are backlist. Right. So thank you to Ann Patchett Parnassus Books for that turn of phrase. If you haven't read the book, it's new to you. We love that. Alright, Kaytee, that is it for this week. As a reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me I'm Meredith at @MeredithMondaySchwartz on Instagram.

Kaytee Cobb 52:58

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:02

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 in our show notes and on our website at currentlyreadingpodcast.com.

Kaytee Cobb 53:13

You can also follow the show at @currentlyreading podcast on Instagram or email us at currently reading podcast@gmail.com. And

Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:20

if you want more of this content, become a bookish friend for \$5 a month you can support us on Patreon and you get a ton more content and you can be a part of our Facebook community which is over 2000 readers strong and very, very active. You can also shout us out on social media and rate and review us on Apple podcasts. All of those things make a huge difference in our finding the perfect audience. Yes,

Kaytee Cobb 53:45

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:50
next week, may your coffee be hot.

Kaytee Cobb 53:53
Your book The unputdownable

Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:54
Happy reading Kaytee

Kaytee Cobb 53:56
Happy reading Meredith