



# Season 6, Episode 36: New Kinds of Books + Managing Our Massive TBRs

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**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:11

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 reading outside is my new favorite thing.

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:41

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in Arizona. And even all these years later, I'm still learning about new kinds of books. This is episode number 36 of season six. And we are so glad you're here.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:53

Hey, Kaytee can I ask you a question I've never asked you before.

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:56

Yes, please.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:58

Is there anything that you do right before we record, like every time like a not a not a, like a ritual? Like a ritual? Not something that is superstitious, but just as a ritual

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:10

before we actually sit down or before we hit record? Well, either one, okay. Yeah, every time before we actually hit the record button, or while you are doing your intro, I do a very deep breath in, and a very deep breath out as quietly as possible. In order to like, center myself in this space. I'd like to name I guess, I don't know. It's a little woowoo. But I do it every single time.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 01:35

But you've always done it?

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:36

Um, yeah, I think every episode all you know, 280 or however many we're up to now. That's

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 01:41

interesting, right? Obviously, I'm talking so I had no idea that you were doing that. You know this about me, but I eat a piece of chocolate every single time before we record before we recorded someone else's show. Anytime I get in front of the mic. I eat one small piece of piece of chocolate. It just was Easter so of course we do See's Candy for Easter candy. Okay, one of their milk chocolate eggs and I am like so hyped up. So

**Kaytee Cobb** 02:05

milk chocolate. Well, I mean, it says

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 02:06

I'll do any chocolate.

**Kaytee Cobb** 02:08

Any chocolate. Okay. Yeah, but not white chocolate. No, well, that's not gonna give me what I'm looking for. Yeah, it's just cocoa oils or whatever. We don't

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 02:17

know. Exactly. All right, I just something I didn't know about you. And now I do. I actually

**Kaytee Cobb** 02:20

just talked to Shad about this because I was like, I doubt that Meredith even notice that I do have this big breath in. But when I'm starting the episode, I have to do it and then start talking. So it has to like work into the routine when I'm recording with somebody who's not you. So

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 02:35

got interesting. It is interesting, the more you know, okay,

**Kaytee Cobb** 02:38

today, y'all we're not going to talk about that. We're going to talk for our deep dive about having an embarrassment of riches and managing a giant TBR are great books, how we pick our next ones, and what that even means for our reading lives. But first we'll get started the way we usually do, which is with our bookish moments of the week. Meredith tell us about reading outside.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 02:58

I will didn't we just say that we were late on chit chat and then I started us out with some chit chat. It happens I know it does. It's that chocolate okay. So yes, it is spring in Texas my loves and I am living

for spring in Texas. I've said before it is my favorite season here. I come from the northern area of California. Where we don't really get seasons in Texas. We get seasons ish. And one of them that we get is spring and it is just Texas just puts on such a show. The weather is beautiful, the humidity is low. It is definitely between 75 and 85. So perfectly warm to be outside and the mosquitoes haven't yet hatched all of their murder for plants. So I recently gave a good look to my backyard. We have a beautiful pool where we put a dining table under a beautiful pergola that we built but here's thing Kaytee, I don't love eating outside. I want to love eating outside because it seems like a good thing.

**Kaytee Cobb** 04:04

Dream Meredith loves eating outside. Exactly. Okay, but real Meredith

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 04:09

does not like bugs in her food. So I decided to scrap what I thought that area should be. And instead I bought a brand new sectional couch with like a deep like a super deep sectional with really great cushions and throw pillows and a beautiful coffee table and I really did the thing up right. And now we are out there all the time. In the morning, in the evening in the afternoon right now of course the afternoons it's going to be way too hot and not very long to be out there for really reading but again evening and morning time. The point being a reading outside is a whole vibe. It's very different from reading inside. FYI in case in case everyone didn't know this. And also, sometimes you just have to learn Look at an area that you've always thought was going to be one thing and just given to the fact that it needs to be another kind of like how my dining room now is mostly a library. And we only do like really formal meals in there. But that's okay. Because now I love it because it's my library. So anyway, that's my bookish moment. I love to read outside. And

**Kaytee Cobb** 05:19

I love rethinking a space and turning it into something that's more useful for the way that our family works. Like our formal dining area is a homeschool room, because we don't have formal meals. Right? So it works out great for us. Right,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 05:34

exactly. It's absolutely perfect. So I love it. What's your bookish moment of the week?

**Kaytee Cobb** 05:39

Okay, Meredith, my bookish moment is a journey that I'm going to take you on. So last night, Jason and I, my husband, we went on a date and we were chatting with our server. I pointed to a tattoo on her forearm and I asked about it. And that led to a conversation with a book recommendation from me to her of *Breathless* by Amy McCulloch, which I just finished this past week, because it was a tattoo of a mountain. Right? She said that she's a reader, and she'll look into this book, but that she mostly reads and then she looked far off into the distance. You know, the look I'm talking about, right? Yeah, yeah, I told her I know that look, and that we think all reading is good reading. So she proceeded to tell me about channel books. You ever heard of channel books Meredith?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 06:20

I have not. Okay.

**Kaytee Cobb** 06:22

I was kind of counting on this. I had not either. So the ones she specifically mentioned, psychically attempt to channel the voices of the dead. In one she talked about three people in the 70s channeling the spirit of the Egyptian god Rah, and another, the author's channeled Mary Magdalene to talk about her sexual relationship with Jesus. I'm pretty sure. I tried to make very nice faces that were all encouraging. By the time she walked away, Jason was seriously questioning why I need to make book conversation with everyone. And honestly, so it was I it got a little far afield from like, Let's go order a fun cocktail at this little bar. I was like, Breathlessly by Amy McCullough, you'll love it. She was like, let me tell you what I actually like to read. And I was not prepared. I was not prepared.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 07:09

Yeah, I don't think Breathless is going to scratch that itch. I don't think it will. You know, you to be fair, you had no reason to think that was going to be the the response that you got back. But now you and I and now everyone who listens knows a new kind of thing. Exactly. When's the last time we heard about a new kind of book? I think, right before this. It was fanfiction. For me. I didn't really understand the width and breadth of fanfiction. Right?

**Kaytee Cobb** 07:35

And that's kind of what I thought she was going to talk about. I was like channels like read it like fanfiction? Maybe that's a no, that's not what she meant at all.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 07:44

Wow. Wow, that's very, very, very interesting. It

**Kaytee Cobb** 07:48

was a whole thing. It was a journey all the way to the top of that mountain on her forearm. So let's get into our current reads, which none of them are channel books, but I'm sure you can find information about that somewhere on the internet. It knows everything. Meredith, what's your first current read? Okay,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 08:04

I'm very excited to talk about the books that I'm bringing today. Very, very excited. Okay, so the first book, if you like murder mysteries, if you call yourself a murderful, you need to get this book five star alert. It is Confessions by Kanae Minato. And it is so good. Here's the setup. But the setup doesn't do it justice. So I'm gonna give you a setup. But just know that the book is so much better than this setup is. Our lead character is Teacher Yuko Moriguchi. And she was the very, very loving mother of only one child, a four year old little girl, but a tragic accident took place on the grounds of the middle school where you co teaches and you go, has now decided to quit because she just can't face the school or the students anymore. But first before she quits. She has one last lecture to deliver. And this is where our story starts. Yuko tells a story that up and everything her students ever thought that they knew about themselves and their fellow students and sets in motion and unimaginable and brilliant plot for revenge. Okay, have you heard of this book Kaytee?

**Kaytee Cobb** 09:18

No, I was looking at it while you were talking because no idea.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 09:23

Right? And it apparently has it was written like 15 years ago. It apparently has a cult following. It's had a movie made of it. It is like one of the best selling Japanese mysteries of all time. And here I am like dingdong not reading it forever. And it's been sitting on my shelf because I kept asking myself what did I just read and why did I not read this 15 years ago? More questions. How is it possible that this is a debut novel written apparently when the author was just in the midst of living a normal life and doing household chores and teaching homework At some school, she just dashed this off in between amazing. And why are Japanese mysteries so smart, especially compared to every current day American thriller out there, this slim novel, it only clocks in at 234 pages was an incredibly fast read. And yet it gave my brain so much to chew on. Imagine me with 45 minutes in between when my son needed to be dropped off for his choir performance and when they actually went on for their choir performance, madly trying to read as fast as I could out of this paperback book because the sun was going down. And like getting my my flashlight. I could not stop reading this book, I was absolutely obsessed. We have incredibly recent readable prose, we have characters that are fully fleshed out. And absolutely every one of these characters sent a chill up my spine, we have a construction of the book that starts out strong and somehow gets smarter and stronger as it goes. This book has a puzzle at its center. And the puzzle is trying to figure out whose confession is the worst one, I had no idea what to expect when I read this book, I only knew that a couple of very trusted sources, including at @bookishbetsie and at @readlexyread told me that this book was incredible. And I of course, had to trust them. It did take me a while to pick it up, which had me definitely questioning my own judgment. They were 100% Correct. If you loved The Devotion of Suspect X and how smart that book was, you need to get this book right now. If you love smart mysteries of any kind, you need to read this book right now because your love of the genre will not be complete until you have added this to your reading stack. This book is absolutely incredible on every level. It's pure and simple. And it's a chilling five stars. This is Confessions by Kanae Minato. This book is so good Kaytee

**Kaytee Cobb** 12:06

it sounds amazing.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 12:07

It's so good. It's so good. It's one of the most perfect mysteries I've ever read.

**Kaytee Cobb** 12:15

Gosh, that that by itself. I mean, just that you people are like swarming their libraries right now. I'm so excited. It's so so good. Sounds amazing. Yeah, I'm gonna segue with a another book and translation. Mine is from Korea, though. So I'm going to talk about Welcome to the Hyunam-Dong Bookshop by Hwang Bo-Reum. This is a new release, as are all my books this week, which is a little weird for me. It's a quiet novel about books and bookshops and perfect for a reset book between some things that are more intense either emotionally or mentally. Well, it was released in 2002. In Korea, it was recently translated into English and brought to the US in late 2023 Yong Joo is our bookstore owner. She had done everything right in her life. I assume she's the one. She attended all the right schools. She married

someone wonderful. She had gotten a decent job, and then it all starts to fall apart. As her life crumbles around her. She decides to abandon her high stress high pay job and open a bookshop instead, which will probably also be high stress, but definitely not high pay just for a year just to see how it goes. She uses this time running a bookshop to get a better feel for who she is as a person over the course of this year on a small side street. In a charming neighborhood of sell, she takes refuge from her life. Alongside the customers that start to visit her little shop. She hires a barista to make drinks for the readers. She makes friends with the man who comes in to read for hours a day, sometimes finishing three books. In one long sitting the barista gets to know the coffee roaster. And the writer who comes in for an author event stays when he finds a brilliant community of readers there in each of these central characters expands our lens just a little bit more until it feels like we're sort of on a sitcom set. Not in that it's a comedy but in that each character plays a very specific role in this small little bookshop ecosystem. Yong Joon starts to get a feel for the way she wants to be a bookseller in the world, whether it's important to have read all the books she carries or whether she wants to always order 10 or 50 of the next big bestseller, and how she wants to spend the life that she has had to pivot to the one that she didn't expect. This story is heartwarming and cozy. It makes you want a warm cup of tea. It's a bit like a cozy fantasy without any of the fantastical elements. It's also a bit like before the coffee gets cold without the time travel elements. Mostly it's a story about how books and bookstores are the best places to lose ourselves and then find ourselves again. I have a story graph shelf dedicated to books about books, ones that are perfect to press into the hands of people who loved the reading list or no two persons or even one of our beloved favorites. 84 Charing Cross Road this one perfectly sits on the shelf with each of those other three. It was delightful and lovely and calm and it wasn't stressful in any way whatsoever, which is what I needed at the time. It's Welcome to the Hyunam-Dong Bookshop by Hwang Bo-Reum.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 15:16

So it wasn't sad.

**Kaytee Cobb** 15:18

It was not sad. Okay. I was worried that there was going to be its dark blue cover. So I was like, oh, yeah, but it was lovely.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 15:25

Sometimes you need a book like that. Just that that like emotional support book is just going to be with you when you need something very calm and peaceful. I

**Kaytee Cobb** 15:33

love that. It was great. All right, well,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 15:35

you brought all frontlist I'm bringing all backlist so that that's an all of mine are murderful this week. So surprise, big surprise. All right, this next one I also liked a lot. This is a book called There's Something I Have To Tell You by Michelle McDonagh. Here's the setup. Our setting is a large farm. It's called Glenn Beck farm and it's an East Galway in rural Ireland. The community as we start is in an uproar because two bodies have been found having died in a horrible, really horrible and tragic way away. None of the

people in this rural town ever want to die. The two dead people, our wealthy matriarch Ursula Kennedy and her former husband, Jimmy. All signs point to this being a tragic accident. But there are questions because though they seem to be a big happy family, it doesn't escape. Notice that the couple's kids, they have three kids are all much better off now that their parents are dead. Not just from a wealth perspective. oldest son Rob was a really successful attorney before he gave it up to come home and help his parents with their family farm. There had recently been a lot of fights between him and his parents. And he had been going back and forth about business and money. So maybe he's not so upset that they're not there anymore. And then there's Rob's wife, Kate, who had a terrible relationship with her mother in law, Ursula, who was a real piece of work. Ursula, she was rude, controlling always with opinions about their home, and their life, and how they raise their kids. So it must be a relief to have Ursula out of the picture for Kate, right? And then we have Christina, the victims' oh so fragile daughter. Well, she has a pretty terrible secret. And now no one to worry about them finding out so the police suspicions begin to grow. And before long, all the Kennedys' dirty laundry is hung up on the line for everyone to see. Alright, I heard about this book from Elizabeth Barnhill, she had found it when she was on her travels in Ireland. And I think it was Catherine Ryan Howard who recommended it to her and I liked this one. This is what I would call solid Irish crime fiction. It has a shocking crime at the beginning. Trust me, I'm just going to underscore again, I've thought a lot about how these two people die, and never want to die this way. And then it has a long slow burn and figuring out exactly what happened. Note that the book itself once we get past those initial deaths is not gory at all. So HSPs you will be fine here. I think if you love the idea of family secrets, you are going to find so much to like here because this book has a deft hand with weaving family secrets into what is like long held family secrets with what's happening in the current day. That's done really well. Also, if you really liked Sally Hepworth's Mother In Law, then I think you'll find a lot to like here, because this book has a memorably terrible mother in law character, that Ursula woman, and it was absolutely fascinating. So each one of the characters is given a full arc. They aren't just evil for evil sake. And I appreciated that very much. So why is this not a five star book for me? This is because this one had a problem with pacing. It has such a mushy middle, like the whole middle 40% just not a ton happens. So I found my patients waiting, but the audio production is really, really well done. And that kept me listening. And I was paid back in full with an incredibly satisfying ending. So overall, I would absolutely read more from this author and I plan to and I will say if you really liked maybe the TV adaptation of apples never fall notice I'm not mentioning the book, but if you liked the TV presentation of it, I think you'll like this one. This is There's Something I Have To Tell You by Michelle McDonagh.

**Kaytee Cobb 19:34**

That's a good Irish name, isn't it? All right. My second one this week is nonfiction. It's Life in Five Senses by our beloved Gretchen Rubin. Oh, yes. I was so excited to get to this book. So I read this one as a buddy read with our longtime bookish friend like since day one, Sarah Kilpatrick. She and I connected via daily check ins on Facebook Messenger just reflecting on what we learned and read that day as we were through the book, Life in Five Senses is Gretchen's newest release. And I've been a long and devoted fan of her work. So I was excited to pick this one up. Also, anyone who listens to The Happier Podcast will have heard little snippets of this book through her try this at home segments over the past few years. It made it easy to tell the way that researching sense and perception really captured her attention because it was coming out of her in every media that she experiences and that she gives us information in early in the book, Rubin goes to the eye doctor to update her prescription, and he

leaves her with an offhand comment as he's finishing up her appointment about how her nearsightedness leaves her at higher risk of a detached retina, which could potentially result in blindness. And then she's like, and then he's like, bye, see you next time. She is struck by the fact that she's just being casually informed that she could lose her sight at anytime. And isn't that her most important sense? Like don't we all love our sight? Of course we do. On the way home that day, Gretchen feels like she's seeing a new for the first time. Kind of like that car accident feeling right when you narrowly avoided a terrible fate. She has been given a new lease on life, or at least on her sense of sight. So she decides to spend a year exploring her five senses in greater detail. This book chronicles the way she's she explores first sight, and then hearing, smell, taste and touch to a deeper level, the ways she has taken her senses for granted and the ways she attempts to engage them. Her overall goal as with most of her work is to be happier and more mindful. She wants her senses to surprise and delight her rather than just being tools for experiencing the world, which a lot of us do, right? We don't care that much about our sense of touch until we feel a really silky soft blanket or until we feel something that really bothers us in some way. Gretchen Rubin does a great job at making senses really understandable and approachable. In this book, she includes some of the research around each of the five senses, and then she talks about how they manifest in her daily life. She invites us into the different projects and activities that she undertook and even works her daily visits to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and to each of her explorations of the senses, Sara and I found so much to discuss, from what flavors we each love to our strange or normal preferences for smell, and how we'd like to work touch into our lives in different ways. I also spent the evening of my anniversary just a few weeks ago discussing this book with Jason, it made a really great conversation starter for us to talk about our own favorite senses, and the ones we felt were more neglected or less appreciated in our own lives. A few weeks later, I got a small package from Sarah in the mail, which included a sensory gift, my kids and I sat down together and opened it and had fun exploring the five little presents that she sent and the ways that she incorporated each scents into this box of goodies. I was so grateful to read and process with Sarah and for the ways that Gretchen invited us into the world of senses as a place of discovery and delight. This was excellent. And it made me look at and sense my world in a totally new way. This is Life in Five Senses by Gretchen Rubin.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 23:08

I'm glad that you brought that one that was one that I knew was coming out. But for some reason I hadn't gravitated toward it. But I'm really glad that it's that good. I think I'll take a look at it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 23:19

And it's worth picking up in paper. There's a number of ways that she incorporates photos into the text so that you can see, you know, some of the stuff she was doing throughout this year and kind of, you know, her little collections of a certain color or whatever she's messing around with in her house. So I didn't listen to some of it because I liked her voice but mostly I recommend reading it in paper. Alright, good.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 23:41

Good one. All right. We will wrap up today with one more classic murder mystery. This is Five Little Pigs by Agatha Christie. Here's the setup. Gorgeous Caroline Crale was convicted of poisoning her husband, even though at the time there was a little bit of doubt as to who had really done it because



there were five other people, five little piggies, just like in the nursery rhyme who were there and who could be suspects. We have Philip Blake, the stockbroker who went to market. We have Meredith Blake, the amateur herbalist who stayed at home. We have Elsa Grier, the three time divorcee who had her roast beef. We have Cecilia Williams, the devoted governess who had none. And Angela Warren, the disfigured sister who cried all the way home. 16 years later, Caroline's daughter is determined to prove her mother's innocence and Poirot just can't get that nursery rhyme out of his head. All right, this one was a banger. This is another book that I had slept on of Agatha Christie's because I just don't love the title. But it was so so good. I ended up giving it 4.5 stars and I liked it even more when I figured out that the title was a reference to the This little piggy goes to market nursery rhyme. I love a good nursery rhyme reference in my murders. My word for this book is symmetry five little pigs is a type A readers dream. It's got a very neat setup and a perfectly neat execution. five suspects, five visits to said suspects, five narratives of the crime and the events leading up to it, and then a wonderful symmetrical ending by Hercule Poirot. But it's also got a ton of interest, a mysterious woman accused of a crime, a white hot love, triangle, art, poison, everything. It's my catnip. Actually, it even has cat nip in it. We don't get a lot of inner monologue from Hercule here or a right hand man for him to talk to as he solves the case, which I always miss. But the effect that it gives is one of supreme confidence. Hercule goes in, gets the goods and gets his man or woman, he never stumbles or doubts himself for a moment, and neither do we, I think five little pigs is now in my top five Poirot novels. And of course, I will always recommend that you do these via audiobook this one with the narration of Hugh Fraser c'est magnifique. This is Five Little Pigs by Agatha Christie. So

**Kaytee Cobb** 26:28

fun, I definitely have to admit that that title does not grab me either. But I'm so glad that this one was a hit.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 26:35

Right? Well, apparently five little pigs has meaning in the UK in a way that this little piggy goes to market would have meaning for us. Okay, so I didn't put those two things together. Okay, as an American reader, if I had realized that's what it was referencing, I would have read it a lot sooner. So and it's again, I love a nursery rhyme with my murder. So this is a really, really good one. And I'm so delighted by how many people have told me they have started reading Agatha Christie, because I bring her books every so often because I'm trying to read all the Poirot mysteries, and I'm just about there. I think I just have a handful left.

**Kaytee Cobb** 27:13

We'll have to start a countdown.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 27:14

I know well, and I've left all the kind of ones till the end. So no,

**Kaytee Cobb** 27:18

I feel like you need a scratch off poster. That would be great. I wonder if there is such a thing? I bet there is. I bet I could find one.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 27:24**

That's a great idea. I would love that. Because then if there was that, then I probably would even like should I read Miss Marple? I really should probably give her a try. Just so obsessed with her cool that it's going to be hard to you know, have it pivot.

**Kaytee Cobb 27:40**

Yeah, I can see that makes sense. All right. I know what I'm gonna be doing after this. Google here I come. All right. Okay. My third one this week though, is one that I am so excited to talk about. This is my five star read of the episode. It's A Love Song for Ricky Wilde by Tia Williams. Oh my heart. I love this book. Okay, Ricky Wilde is the newest novel from Tia Williams after her mega bestseller a few years back in 2021, which was called Seven Days in June. I gave Seven Says in June a five star review at the time. So this one had a lot to live up to and I was a little nervous to pick it up. Let me tell you about it. Ricky Wilde is the fourth daughter of a hugely successful family that made their money in funeral homes. As with many parts of the funeral industry, this family is buttoned up quiet, proper. But Ricky is not that. She is wild. She loves plants and flowers. And rather than trying to cash in on her inheritance from this big wild funeral homes conglomerate, she makes the decision to move to New York City to open her own flower shop. This is not necessarily on a whim because she's garnered a huge success with her Instagram account, which is very funny. It's bought any flowers lately. When she meets Miss Della, who offers to rent her the bottom floor of her Harlem brownstone, we have the making of a found family situation. And you know, I love that Ricky transforms the space into a flower shop and a studio apartment calling her new shop wild things. In the meantime, we also meet Ezra Walker in 1923. That's 100 years ago, right? He is a jazz musician, trying to make it on the streets in New York after a tragedy claimed most of his family. He carries a lot of survivor's guilt, but is able to use his immense talents to get into some of the most famous jazz clubs in the city, mostly as a piano player. Of course, Ezra and Ricky's stories collide in the best way because it's a romance. They meet unexpectedly and impossibly in a small garden filled with night blooming Jasmine and are irresistibly drawn to each other. Ricky is attempting to manage her new business so she can make it in the wide world and prove to her staid family, that she is not In just a flighty dandelion of a human, Ezra is attempting to stay as far away from Ricky as possible in order to keep her safe and avoid breaking his own heart. Both of them are charming and charismatic and someone you find yourself falling for and that found family I mentioned. Of course we have the grandmother asked Mrs. Della, Ricky's landlady and trusted friend, we also meet Tuesday row, a child start dealing with the fact that she became famous very young, and therefore the public feels they are owed her life and her time in a very public way. It's also so clear that Tia Williams did a ton of research into the Harlem Renaissance and Jazz Age New York City for this novel. When I heard her speak. Last month at the Tucson Festival of Books, she mentioned that her love of that era is what prompted her to try a romance with a historical aspect. She really wanted to be able to work it into her stories, but she typically writes contemporary romance. Her vast knowledge of this timeframe made the scenes she wrote, especially the ones from the Jazz Age really come alive and leap off the page. I love this book. I loved Ricky and Ezra I loved the historical and contemporary settings. And I loved the lushness of it. The music and the flowers worked in to the story. It truly captured all of my senses, like life in five senses, and I gave it five shining stars. It doesn't change the fact that I also loved seven days in June. But it makes me want to have a six star to give to this one to show it's above and beyond this and compare it to that one. And I will also say that it's probably a four on our spicy scale of one to five chili peppers. For the romance section. They do

happen. You do have to pay attention during those scenes. You can't just skip them, and they are a bit spicy, but they're part of the story. So you got to hang in for them. This is A Love Song for Ricky Wilde by Tia Williams.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 31:53

Wouldn't they have to be really spicy to get a four out of five? Well, everything

**Kaytee Cobb** 31:58

has changed as far as my scale goes after I read Butcher & Blackbird like if that's a five, it has to be really spicy to get a five now.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 32:07

Well, that's what I'm saying is so this one is not that spicy. So wouldn't it be cut we can take this out but like, I

**Kaytee Cobb** 32:14

mean, it's still pretty spicy. I I would not want to have a conversation with my mother while I was listening to the audiobook. Okay, cuz I would be like, just a little uncomfortable.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 32:24

Let me pause this and get back to you. So yeah, got it. Okay. Okay.

**Kaytee Cobb** 32:29

Okay, let's talk about our TBRs. Meredith, I am excited to get into this. We we have talked about how we choose our next reads before on the podcast, but it's been a long time. And I'm guessing you are in the same situation I am, which is that your TBR has not decreased since we had that last conversation.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 32:47

No, it has only increased it has only grown. It's like a plant that is growing without any control.

**Kaytee Cobb** 32:55

Yeah, it's just it's starting to trail all over the house. Yeah, like a Porthos. That just goes everywhere. Okay, so this deep dive idea came from our bookish friend and podcast pal, Holly Laine Fairall. You can listen directly to her on Hearts and Daggers podcast, but she wanted to know, what do you do with an embarrassment of riches? Like how do you manage a large growing TBR that threatens to take over your entire life. And people like to joke that the readers among us, for me, especially who read a lot are not burdened by a large TBR list like Well, obviously, eventually, you're gonna get to the bottom of the pile. Right? Right. That's not that's not happening. I just want to clarify that here. For the record, I can say because of Bunmi Ishola. My publishing industry insider that brings some insights to our Patreon content, I can tell you that a slow week in the publishing industry will have more than 700 new releases, and an average slash buzzy week we'll have more than 2000 new releases. So it does not matter how many books you read in a year. There will always always be more books to read. Always,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 34:04

how come we only hear about like 15 or 20 Every week

**Kaytee Cobb** 34:09

probably overwhelm, I guess, but otherwise, we might die.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 34:12

Yeah, I just feel like there's new books coming out that we're missing, because we're all talking about the same 20 I'm sure that's true. I can't let myself think about that too much. Because that starts to make me crazy. Yeah, but

**Kaytee Cobb** 34:24

even that it doesn't really matter. Because none of us are reading 20 books a week either. Right?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 34:29

Well, and then right. And then what backlist books have we missed? What fantastic books from and just like 1968 Could we not have we not read? Like it really can. It really can kind of spiral me into anxious thoughts when I think about this. But yes, there's no question that the TBR management you know, we hear a lot of people say there is a totally there are two different hobbies, reading and procuring and organizing and displaying but like those are two different things. Right, yes. And so there's no question that figuring out how to do that. And then one of the things that we've talked about is how much this TBR management can change for each reader over time. There's a lot of things that affect it right? How much you're reading, where you're reading, the format on which you're reading, what inputs you have, as far as like, are you on Bookstagram? Or not? Are you on booktok? Or not? Like, those kinds of things? Are you in a book club, all of those things have an effect on how you choose your next read, plus, who you are as a person.

**Kaytee Cobb** 35:35

Right? Definitely. And that, that plays into like the book club conversation can play into if you have to plan to make space in your reading life for a certain book each month, because you're committed to talking about it in some way, shape, or form. I used to do buddy reads with the currently reading community, where we would all read a book together and get on Zoom and talk about it. And I don't do that. Because I have a hard time now. Planning my reads for the year, right.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 36:05

And so and you read a lot, right? So then I talk all the time, especially to my friends or my colleagues that here comes the guy who will be like, my problem is I'm reading 12 books a year. And so making my next choice of book is there's high stakes. Yeah, right. So the I totally understand that too. I mean, I'm just gonna say right here up at the top, I don't know that I have a really good system. I mean, there are people who use all kinds of different tools and systems to organize their TBR. And they're fantastic. I just don't, my system is really not even I don't even think you would call it a system.

**Kaytee Cobb** 36:49

Because it's the only part of your life that's not systematized though, right? Like everything about your life is systematized.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 36:55

That's definitely true. And there is a part of me that hasn't worked really hard to systematize it because of that exact same, that exact thing. I don't, I don't want this to be something where I have a plan that I have to execute. I want to be able to kind of go with the flow. But then sometimes I'm I'm awake at night thinking, you know, I have 500 books on my Kindle right now. All of which I wanted to read at some point and had a really good reason. Like, it's not like I'm just randomly downloading crappy crap onto my Kindle. I'm trying to beat like, I'm, I'm pretty careful about it. So how am I ever gonna get to these 500 books on my Kindle?

**Kaytee Cobb** 37:37

Yeah. With no, especially with no system? And I just my Kindle is where books go to die? Because I'll never see that book again. Yeah,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 37:45

right, exactly. The biggest thing I can say as far as the system that I have, is, I will know what format I need to choose the book in. So because I always have ongoing on audio, print, Kindle. I know, okay, I just finished my print book, I'm going to look at my shelves. But as we've discussed, so my TBR system is I just have bought every book I want to read and it's all in my house. Yeah, that's, that's my system. And they're categorized in a very bespoke way, which only like three people can unlock the puzzle. So I know where everything is. I have a very good handle on it. And then I just kind of stand in front of my bookshelves. And you know, lots of times people in my house asked me what I'm doing.

**Kaytee Cobb** 38:29

Oh, yes, same.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 38:32

Mom, what do you what are you doing? I'm thinking, thinking about your books. Yeah, I have to choose one. Well, but you're like 20 feet off your bookshelf. How are you going? I know. I'm just thinking. I'm trying to figure out what mood I'm in. Okay.

**Kaytee Cobb** 38:46

But I'll also posit that you have to be at least 10 feet away for a book to wink at you.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 38:53

Well see, I have to be on the other side of my dining room table. Okay.

**Kaytee Cobb** 38:58

Yeah, well, that's probably what eight feet across? I mean, it's a big room. Yeah,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 39:03

it's, you know, so um, but I know, but I can see, like, I know what books I'm looking at. And then once I then what happens is I start to get like a, something winks at me or I start to get drawn to one or two particular shelves. Then I move closer, then I might start touching things. Yeah, it's the touching

**Kaytee Cobb** 39:21

for me. Creepy way. Yep. Yep. No, that's what it is. For me. It's the touching. So I do the same. I stand across my living room. I look at my rainbow TBR shelf mind is not some esoteric organization system. Y'all know it, but it's beautiful. It makes Meredith crazy, but I have a rainbow TBR shelf and I love it. And it's very easy for me to point out to people who come over. I say anything that's in color order is stuff I haven't read so that they're not like, Oh, I've been thinking about this one. What did you think of it? I can say Nope, that whole shelf? That's color order. I haven't read it yet. And I stand there for a while and then somewhere it starts to draw me now and this is very different than the last time we talked about this. Yeah, it was a planned reader, I would sit down, usually toward the end of a month, and make a list for the next month of 10 to 15 books that I thought I really wanted to get to. And then I would do it. Yeah. Yeah. And you put them on your piano, right? Yeah, I would make up stacks all around the house. Usually, I mean, not all around the house, I would make a very specific stack. And I would put library holds on some so that I could do some on audio, some on my Kindle, and some actually picking up the paper book. And then I would just, I would just do it, which now is confounding? Yes. It amazed me all the time. And that just felt normal to me.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 40:40

What do you think changed?

**Kaytee Cobb** 40:41

I think I think it's partially, we talked about this not long ago, and what's working and not in our reading lives, I think it's because with four kids all doing school right now and me homeschooling them, I do have a lot more structure to each of my days than I did for a decade before this. Or, you know, I just had one kid that I had to kind of handhold through certain periods of the day, and now it's a lot between all four of them needing assistance. And so it feels it feels kind of like what you're doing. It's like pushing back against the other structured parts of my life. And saying, Now, I will do what I want to, instead of what I planned to, or instead of what my calendar says I have to have this time. Yeah. So I think it's I think that's part of it. But I'm not really sure. It just stopped working for me. I started making those lists probably about a year ago. And then I didn't want to read anything on that list. Well, and

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 41:35

then so the important thing is that you let yourself change. Yeah, and I think that's the key, right, because nothing about our reading, life stays the same. Over the course of long swaths of time, most of us who have been reader, since we were little will be readers our entire lives, we might read more or less in different seasons, but it will always be a part of it. So being able to make those changes, whether it's all of a sudden, I only want to read cozy mysteries, which I did for a decade, or I never want to read a cozy mystery again. And now I only read whatever, that's totally okay, as long as we let it be different. So I think that that's really important. Now, there are lots of ways that smart ways that people do kind of, because for a lot of people, Roxanna being one of them, for example, Roxana doesn't own a

lot of books, either digitally or physically, because that makes her feel panicky. And it makes her feel overwhelmed. And so she would much rather say, this is what I'm going to read next, I will buy this right now, usually digitally. And so the like, it's like an immediate download, and then she's off to the races.

**Kaytee Cobb** 42:46

That's amazing to me. Yeah, the idea of getting my TBR down to the point where I only have five to seven books on my shelf to choose from or that I have to go buy the next one, when I'm ready to read it. That gives me anxiety in a totally different way. It feels like it would be hard to breathe that idea.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 43:07

Yeah, I've always thought that I am happiest when I am surrounded by books. But it wasn't until we moved to Austin that I really had a home big enough to be this surrounded by books. I mean, for so much of my life, I was in 900 square foot apartments. And by the way, couldn't afford to buy just whatever book I wanted, that was not in the cards for me for most of 47 years of my life. So that you know, I think part of it too is that now I can because of the the show, I can live in abundant bookish abundance, which feels really good. And it feels like living with a bunch of friends. But just to kind of I think it would be helpful if we just kind of went over some of the different ways that people do narrow down a little bit. Right, they could make they could do what you did make a stack on your piano. I know a lot of people will get one of those three shelf like Ikea carts which might also get at Amazon and target and they'll say okay, I'm just gonna say this is my near term TBR or they'll take just one shelf and say this is my near term TBR and I'm just I can take and put things on and take them off as my mood but at least when I get done with a book, I don't have to go to all of my books, I can instead go to like these 10 or 15 I can still choose differently if I want to but it's a little bit easier to get your arms around. A lot of people do digitally. They use Apple notes or different notes programs. There are people who are super organized with the our spreadsheet our reading tracker Kaytee has a place if you want to keep your entire TBR and

**Kaytee Cobb** 43:26

within that TBR sheet now new week this year you can assign either months or seasons or holidays to each book on your TBR and go to a separate sheet and say now I need everything that I signed to the month of April or now I need everything for summer reads that I Add on my TBR. And you can start putting in your library holds or making sure you have a copy accessible somewhere because you know that that's something you want to prioritize and have nearby in the coming month or season. And

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 45:11

doesn't it also, isn't it also smart enough where when it goes from on your TBR to to read, it actually moves to that other worksheet, it

**Kaytee Cobb** 45:19

crosses it out across for you, and puts in the date red and the stars you gave it, I love that. And then now it makes a statistic for that too. So you can see what your average, your average star rating is for the books that you read from your TBR versus the ones that you found serendipitously that you just read, for whatever reason, because you felt like it. So that can be its own thing, right,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 45:41

which is so smart. And I think that's a really, really great way to keep your TBR if you can, did I say this already Trello there are people who use Trello, it will create a card for each one of their books. And they can kind of move them around in different ways. reading log, just a notebook with a list of things when you hear about it. There's all kinds of ways to keep track of your tea or your TBR. And I think what it comes down to is figuring out how do you feel as a reader the moment it's time to choose your next book? What are the thoughts and feelings that you have at that moment that is going to lead you to systems for creating your your best TBR system?

**Kaytee Cobb** 46:23

Yeah, I know there are people who also do I mean, I don't know if you remember, but many years ago, I used to make a bowl of nonfiction and fiction TBR. Or maybe it was the different formats I was reading in. And I would pick one out of that bowl to decide which one would come up next. And if I had a visceral reaction that was like, oh, no, not that one. I would just put it back in. I'm picking that one. And that's okay. Yeah, my TBR I can do whatever I want. But it was a way to bring something to the top. And then let myself decide if that was the thing to read next, that

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 46:54

is more akin to what I've been doing lately, to be honest, because I've been using lots of different tricks and methods for figuring like on my Kindle, or so I told you last week, I've been reading more on my iPad. So on the iPad, it's really fun to look at your library because it's in color. But I also have so many arcs like I just need to stop going to Netgalley, which

**Kaytee Cobb** 47:17

I'm not feeling we have this conversation a year ago.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 47:20

I'm not going to do that. So, but so what I started doing was, well, okay, I had had like a half a glass of wine. And I was like, what would happen if I just like scrolled up? And then like, did like the prices right? And then just kind of like that? Yes. And then just like stuck my big fat finger in the middle of my screen and whatever it was was, that's the kind of thing I've been doing to choose

**Kaytee Cobb** 47:44

books. Like, have you found something exciting that way? Yeah.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 47:49

In fact, I just did that last night, and I'm reading the New Riley Sager. Oh,

**Kaytee Cobb** 47:53

is that exciting? Yeah. Well,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 47:55

I mean, the it's actually quite striking. It's quite good. I'm really I'm like 30% into it now.



**Kaytee Cobb** 48:01

The last one. And so now you're due to love one?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 48:03

No, because you know, I have a uneven history with Riley Sager. I'm just not sure I would have chosen right now to read it. But when I did my fat finger roulette, and I was just like, hey, this came up. Let's at least just see. And now I'm totally into it. I've also asked the bookish friends. Hey, tell me what book I should read next. And the first one I own. I will read I've done that twice. And that's worked really, really well.

**Kaytee Cobb** 48:27

I need to do that. It's fun. I'm gonna do that for my next raid. I'm gonna play bookish friend roulette. Yeah,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 48:33

it's nice to have serendipity be able to take the lead when you know that you can smack her off the lead and make a different choice if you have to make

**Kaytee Cobb** 48:43

make a new choice for yourself. Yes. Yes, sir. Deputy I'm taking back over now. Yeah,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 48:48

well, you're in charge. Yeah. You don't know what you're doing? Clearly, clearly.

**Kaytee Cobb** 48:53

Okay. Meredith, if you had to just off the top of your head, put a number on it, including all the formats you read in how many titles do you think are on your TBR? 2500.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 49:04

Whew. That's a big number.

**Kaytee Cobb** 49:06

Yeah. So mine, because of the Kindle situation and audible, I used to just buy daily deals willy nilly. Just I would just buy them because they were 299. And I was like, who was Who's it gonna hurt? Nobody?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 49:19

Yeah. Except it hurts you. Yeah, it hurts you.

**Kaytee Cobb** 49:22

Yeah. So once you include audible, and then the libro FM galleys that I used to just grab 10 of them,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 49:29

I stop, I need to stop doing that. I need to stop doing that. And

**Kaytee Cobb** 49:33

my Kindle books, and my paper books. I was gonna guess around 1000. And I think that is a little bit of blindness, because I do know there are at least 450 titles in my audible catalog and another 350 in my Libro catalog. So that's already most of the way to about

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 49:50

exactly right. And then all your print books and all your Kindle but I mean, yeah, it's yeah, it's probably a lot higher than that. Yeah, maybe 2000 But honestly, I think it's I think it's closer to 2500. Okay, and I do what I have taken to doing more is I have become freer with my delete finger, or with my even calling some books off of my shelves because you know, all those bookshelves that I bought for like all the different rooms, they're all full. So I've taken to going like, okay, it's been three, four or five years since I bought that book. I know enough about it, that I don't, it doesn't hold as much mystery as it did before. And I know for me as a reader, it's really not like I've moved past it in some way. A lot of thrillers go by the wayside. For me. Honestly, I just did a big thriller cull. Because I just was like, I just am not reading this kind of book anymore. It's not making me happy. I'm not lending. I'm not spending a lot of time with people who are reading these kinds of books. So I'm not like lending them out to people. So to Half Price Books, they go, excellent.

**Kaytee Cobb** 50:54

And you know what that is? Gasoline for the fire. More new books. That's what happens when you go to Half Price Books. Except

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 51:01

you know what happens? I've started I send Johnny. Yeah, but you're still building up credit. Or, you know, he's getting me back with cash. He gets cash. And then I just tell him, just don't just buy yourself something pretty. Oh,

**Kaytee Cobb** 51:15

cute. So that

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 51:16

don't give it back to me and tell me to spend it on books. He's

**Kaytee Cobb** 51:18

like, look at these new pair of shoes. Converse.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 51:21

Yep. Yep. Love that. Okay, well,

**Kaytee Cobb** 51:25

I have a feeling there's gonna be a lot of feels a lot of conversation about this TBR situation. And the day this episode drops, I'm letting the bookish friends choose my next read. So I'm excited about that, too.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 51:36**

I love it. I love it. Just to cite just the first thing you need to know is are you right now, you may not always be but right now, are you a planned reader or a mood reader? Once you know that, then you can begin to explore different methods based on your preferred method of choosing your books. All right,

**Kaytee Cobb 51:53**

let's go over to the fountain. Meredith, what is your wish this week?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 51:58**

My wish this week harkens back to my first five star book that I talked to her my five star book that I talked about today, confessions, and my absolute love, which I have just found over the course of the last couple of years really 2021 was when I read The Devotion of Suspect X by Keigo Higashino was recommended to me my to me by Roxanna. I had never read a Japanese mystery before. And The Devotion of Suspect X kicked off my love of this sub genre. I love it. So so much. So my wish is to give you guys a little bit about what The Devotion of Suspect X is about and to hope that if you haven't already picked up confessions, which really What are you doing with yourself, you also at the same time, get your scrolling finger out and and get The Devotion of Suspect X. Here's the setup of that book, our lead characters Yasuko Hanaoka and she is a divorced single mom. She thought that she had finally gotten away from her horrible, abusive, super violent ex husband. But he shows up one day and tries to extort her. And one thing leads to another and ex husband ends up dead on the apartment floor. Well, next door is your sukko's her next door neighbor who's middle aged, brilliant. He's a high school math teacher, and he comes over knocks on her door and offers to help not only to dispose the body, but to plot the cover up. So then the body turns up, the police get involved detective Kusanagi who's one of my favorite detective characters of all time, he draws the case and he immediately sees something fishy. And he however, is unable to find any obvious holes in Yasuko's alibi because Yasuko the woman is the one who has come under suspicion, but he still is sure there's something wrong so the story then becomes a battle of wits with an explosive conclusion. You're The Devotion of Suspect X is such a good summer read. It is smart and paste perfectly. And you will come away from the reading of that book thing. Where can I get more Keigo Higashino. The good news is it is the first in a series but you'll need to read the first one it's not like they it's not like it's a clipping or anything. The first one is totally standalone. So I wish that as many people who love mysteries would read The Devotion of Suspect X by Keigo Higashino that

**Kaytee Cobb 54:21**

is a great wish pink splash yes things flash. Okay, I let on only helped me with my wish today. This is gonna be fun. Okay, so my wish is to share about a new social media collaboration. But to get there, I asked only what my wish at the fountain should be this week. And she said grabbing a butterfly and holding it in your hand. And I was like that's not the kind of girl but that's a lovely wish, but it's super cute. It's pretty great. It reminded me of my childhood love for Reading Rainbow. So I'm going to pivot the holding a butterfly in my hand and let everyone know about the collaboration, upcoming collaboration. between Mychal Threats who was a previous fountain wish of mine that people would go follow him on Instagram, and he is going to be collaborating with PBS in a bid to rekindle a new generations love for Reading Rainbow, Michael revealed that he would be collaborating with PBS kids

on a social media series centered around real life library stories book joy, literacy, and the pure joy that libraries bring to communities, he is going to be the resident librarian for PBS. And anyone around my generation, or the ones right before or after mine knows how special it is that there's a Reading Rainbow throwback here, I may not have a butterfly in my hand, but I'll leave it in the sky so that I can go twice as high. And I'm so excited to let everybody else experience that with the generations to come. So go follow Michael Threets if you didn't before, but also be looking for his collaborations with PBS in order to rekindle Reading Rainbow painting splash.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 55:59

I love it. That is such a good wish. And I have been so interested in his content that he's doing in this new role, and how they're going to kind of brand and roll out the Reading Rainbow stuff. I'm

**Kaytee Cobb** 56:09

so excited for it. Yes, me too.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 56:11

Excellent. Okay, 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** 56:19

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

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 56:23

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** 56:34

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

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 56:41

if you really want to help us you can rate and review us on Apple podcast you can shout us out on social media and if what you're hankering for is more of our bookish content. We've got you covered on our Patreon for just \$5 a month you can get all manner of bookish content from us. We would love it if you would check that out. We would so appreciate it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 57:00

Yes, bookish friends are the best friends especially when they help us choose our next reads thanks for helping us grow and get closer

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 57:06

to our goals. All right, until next week, may your coffee be hot,

**Kaytee Cobb** 57:10

and your book be unputdownable.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 57:11

Happy reading Kaytee.

**Kaytee Cobb** 57:13

Happy reading Meredith