



Season 6, Episode 4: Nasal Adventures and Two Tropes Diverge in a Wood

Mon, Aug 27, 2023 • 1:11:41

Kaytee Cobb 00:10

Hi 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 already know, we don't shy away from having strong opinions. So get ready.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 00:23

We're light on the chit chat 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.

Kaytee Cobb 00:33

I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in Arizona, and I love exploring a new library.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 00:39

And I'm Roxanna Kassam Kara, a mom, a marketer and a mood reader living in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. And this year, I've got a lot of September energy. This is episode number four of season six. And we're so glad you're here.

Kaytee Cobb 00:53

I am so glad to be here with you, Roxanna. And I'm trying to channel your Canadian September energy down here to Arizona where it is still well over 100 degrees, which is disgusting, which,

Roxanna Kassam Kara 01:05

okay, and it's warm here too. But we've already started to get cooler days. And so it's not quite September, but also our school year starts in September. So for us, it really does have kind of a new energy. It's a bit more in the mornings school starting like starts after Labor Day. So September 5, I think this year. So you know, you just come into it with a bit of a more back to school energy, which is always so, so fine.

Kaytee Cobb 01:31

That is fine. One of our favorite people Gretchen Rubin says September is the other January. And it's for that same reason. Although here in Arizona, they are moving to year round school. So all the kids

here started like July 25, or something. And that felt very strange to me. That's just yucky. I'm sorry, not July as the other January, which is just very well, yes, it has been six full months since just you and I got to record together as I noticed when we got on Skype today. So I'm very excited to talk to you. And our deep dive today is about similar tropes that we love, and the ones we hate, like, this is gonna be fun. This was Roxanna's idea. And as soon as she suggested it, we just ran with it. So I'm excited to get to that. But first, we will get started the way we always do with our bookish moments of the week. Roxanna, what have you got for us?

Roxanna Kassam Kara 02:20

Okay, well, as I said, I've got a lot of September energy heading in, we got that we're at the end of August here, almost there. And like you said, I actually had in my intro, September is the other January because I, I really do believe that too. And September for me always gets me in the mood for new projects. And I've got a few new projects that I'm working on. And the one I'm most excited about is called The Purpose Project, which I was telling you about, which is a Substack. So it's like a website and a newsletter and explores how people find and create meaning in their work. So it's a subject I'm really excited about. And I've been doing a lot of reading about purpose for this project, both fiction and also in nonfiction. And honestly, Kaytee, like I remembered how much I love reading that way, you know, like with a stack of index cards and a highlighter, and writing down quotes and ideas as they come to me and like all that back to school energy in the school supplies in the sitting down to the focused kind of reading is, so it's so much like school reading, and I did my degree in English Lit too. So it just brings back all these great memories. And I'm really, really loving it. So I'm very excited about that. And you can check out the site or sign up for my newsletter at RoxannaKassamkara.substack.com, or you can find the link on my instagram at [@Roxannathereader](https://www.instagram.com/Roxannathereader).

Kaytee Cobb 03:37

And of course in our show notes, because we know everybody's gonna want to go check that out. I love that this kind of connects back to the very first time that we had you on Currently Reading as a guest that time not as a show regular, when you talked about your index cards, and making notes and the way that you used index cards as a commonplace book for yourself so that you could put things in by topic. And so it's kind of like a full circle back to that moment. This is very fun for me.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 04:06

I love that. I love that you remember that. First of all, I do still write in a commonplace book. And I do love that. And yes, I'm doing the same thing with The Purpose Project. And I'll actually circle back to that at the fountain. So well, we really will come full circle.

Kaytee Cobb 04:21

Okay, all right. I love that. My bookish moment this week. I've had a few kind of ups and downs with bookish moments lately, but this week, I've got full bookish delight. We got our new cards to the library system that we get to join now that we've moved. So it's called the Maricopa County Library District has a huge network of libraries with 14 branches, tons of resources, millions of books, so many titles, maybe not millions, but it feels like million. Santa Fe library was so small. The one that's closest to our new house location is bright and airy with high ceilings full of light has a huge children's section. In full of color, tons of new releases, and really lovely librarians. So even though there's a limit of 50 items per

card, which is a lot of items, we got cards for me and each of the four kids because this family considers it a rite of passage, we even had a conversation about this in the bookish friends group this past week in real time, we don't need like the Cobbs do not need 250 items from the library. That is, that's a lot of books, right? A lot of books and movies and resources. But it's so great to have the power to have 250 items if we ever needed to, like maybe if we were working on a project where we really needed to call the resources of the library for that. And it really is about giving my kids the power to say, This is my library card, I get to take out these books just for me, I get to use the self checkout just for me, and instill that love of God going hog wild at the library into them at this very young age, which is why it's so important to us to all get our own library cards. They also have a lot of different card options with this library. It happened to me before. So my little kids chose library cards that have a dragon and a train on them. And my middle boy, and I both got an Inigo Montoya quote on ours, which says, "Hello, my name is Inigo Montoya". And then it goes dot dot dot, and says "you can check out this movie from the library if you don't remember where it's from". And then my oldest son got one that says, "who you're going to call", which, of course, come from Ghostbusters. So each of us kind of got to choose a library card that matches our personality. Everything about it was fantastic, wonderful, bookish, and we loved it.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 06:39

I gotta say, I saw this on Instagram. And I was so jealous. Kaytee, like, I have never heard of this idea for library cards, like, who is the marketer behind this? It's brilliant. And I was so Oh, my God, why is it every library doing this, I want my own personalized card like, then, of course, you got to have your, like, your kids have to have their own cards, because it's their identity. And it just feels so fun. And I will say I really do like the idea of every kid, we do the same, we usually, in fact, take out the books on my card, but every kid has their own card. Because I think it's a rite of passage. When kids get their own cards, they feel it like, you know, we still have them with their little baby signatures on the back. Yes, you know, and they look at them. And then before they could really write, and that's really a moment for them. But also as a kid, like, who hands you a card and says go into this place. And take as many of these things as possible, like that level of control. You don't have over anything in your life, you can't do that anywhere. So to be given that and given full autonomy of what you're choosing how many you choose, like, that's a real like a grown up thing to do. And I feel like it gives kids such just like a sense of grown upness to be able to do that even when they're little

Kaytee Cobb 07:55

Yeah, I love everything that you just said, it's like going to the playground. And somebody saying you can put as many grains of sand in your pockets as you want. Because they're free, right? Like, you literally cannot take enough of them home in your shoes with you. That's the only time that a kid gets to have as much as they want of something because you don't take them to a candy store for that. I mean, most of us do not have the budget taken to the bookstore for that, or the toy store for that or anywhere else like that. But this is its own special treasure of a memory. So very bookish moment this week. All right, let's get into our current reads. Even when we set this up. Roxanna, you said you had been saving some books to talk about with me. And now we know it's been six full months since the last time. So I'm guessing you had a lot to choose from. I can't wait to hear about them. Okay, yeah, I'm

Roxanna Kassam Kara 08:43

so excited. And this one actually is a recent read the first book I'm bringing today, and it was a five star read for me. So I'm so excited to bring Again, Rachel by Marian Keyes. So this book Again, Rachel is a sequel to Rachel's Holiday, which was a blockbuster book that Keyes wrote in 1997, right in the middle of the chick lit era. So Keyes is a really popular Irish author. She's prolific, and she writes in kind of in this frothy, accessible style, but her books are actually especially this one is actually like a much darker Bridget Jones. It's not really Chick Lit it deals with a lot of darker issues. And this one's about a woman who is living a hard life of partying and is forced by her family into rehab, where she has to face some hard truths. So you know, I read this book when it came out in my 20s. And I loved it because it did have sort of that accessible frothy tone, but then it was dealing with some real issues. And it was part of a series of books that Keyes wrote about the Walsh sisters. And it was really about this precarious family of an overbearing mother and a quiet father. And these five very loud, very different sisters. And each book was about a different system. So when I saw this book Again, Rachel at the library, which was the sequel to Rachel's Holiday I was really surprised and delighted to find that Keyes had written a sequel and aged Rachel 20 years, so that she was now in midlife. I love books about women in midlife, especially a character that I shared my 20s with. So of course, I had to pick it up. Yes. So here's the setup. In this book, we meet Rachel 20 years later, as I said, and she is now the head addiction counselor at the very center that she did rehab at, which is called the cloisters. She's doing well she has a job she's good at, she's very close to their family. She has a lovely apartment, and she gardens in her free time. She's split up with her boyfriend, Luke, who was her love interest in the first novel, and you find out here and eventually became her husband. But she has a new love interest. And overall, she's made a great life for herself. So through Rachel were introduced to the various clients at the cloisters and their stories. So I found this part fascinating. You know, Rachel approaches her clients with very much a therapists point of view. So you get that distance. And you see them work through the stages of coming to terms with their addiction, from denial and judgment of others to anger and blame, to heartbreaking sadness to acceptance. So for me, this was a really interesting bird's eye view of what it might be like to work with people, processing and overcoming addiction keys used to be an addict herself. So she brings this to life with sensitivity and honesty. Like you totally get that in this book. Nobody who wasn't an addict could write about it. In this way, it just feels very real. While Rachel is helping her clients through their hard journeys. Her ex husband comes back from the past. And she's forced to face some hard truths of her own truths that she's done a pretty thorough job of hiding from herself, just like her clients do. But as these truths come to light, the image that she's built up for self starts crumbling, this is the part I really love. And it's that Rachel doesn't lose it all and become a toxic Whirlpool, dragging everything and everybody down with her. Instead, she does the healthy and productive midlife thing. She talks to people in her family about what she's going through. She listens to what they're telling her and faces some very important issues that she'd buried. She tries to make things right, you know, like, there's a lot of messiness here, she doesn't get it, all right, it's not perfect. And for sure, there's a lot of gray like she makes, doesn't always make the right or morally correct decision. But I love to see a woman working through her crap productively instead of just wallowing in it. So I'd say if you liked the hard parts of Emily Henry's books, or Katherine Center, then this one would be a great one to pick up. It's more emotional than both of those authors. But Keyes is such a master of confronting hard truth through deceptively light writing that keeps you turning pages compulsively. It would also be great for fans of maybe You Should Talk to Someone by Lori Gottlieb. I really got this

book down in a couple of days. And then I like sat back and marveled that keys had been able to cover such hard emotional territory, through such deceptively light writing, like everything I'm telling you, you don't realize it, when you're reading it, you're just like you're reading it, because it's a fluffy book. Like it's an it has a light cover, and you like you just enjoy it. And then you get through it. And you're like, holy crap. Like, there was a lot in that book, you know, so for me, it was, as I sat with it, it got more and more stars, because I realized, you know, sometimes they say the writing that's hardest to write is easiest to read. That's exactly what she did. Here. It she put a lot in there. It took a lot of thought and a lot of craft, but it feels effortless. So I'll send a couple final notes. I know when I posted on Instagram, a couple people asked, Do I have to read the original or the other novels? You know, it's marked as a series? And I'd say no, it's not really a series, you know, each of the novels are about a different sister. And there's enough background given this book that you don't have to go back and read Rachel's Holiday, you can just start with this one. Also, there is an amazing romance. So I wouldn't say that's the focus of the story. So there are one or two open door scenes, but not as much as, say, an Emily Henry. And then finally, I'll say this book, you know, covers addicts going through recovery and facing the traumas. So there are some triggers who boy, and as I said, keys deals with them all with a light touch. So it doesn't feel like you're going as deep as you are. But there are a couple of plot points that are integral to the story that might be hard for some readers. So look it up on Star graph or message me, Roxanna, the reader, and I can let you know what those are. So that's Again, Rachel, by Marian Keyes.

Kaytee Cobb 14:23

Interesting. I'm glad you addressed the series element, because of course, I looked it up while you were talking. I actually love the way that the covers of these books have changed over the years. This one does look to be more substantive, but maybe it's just that styles have changed over 26 years or 25 years. And that's more appealing now that like starker contrast. It's a navy blue with hot pink accents to it instead of like a floral on a white background. It looks much more like something I would pick up now. And you kind of talked me into it. And well I'm so glad

Roxanna Kassam Kara 14:59

And I will say like those first few books, they were, you know, they're really good, but they're of the 90s Like one of her books was called Sushi for Beginners, which I haven't heard of a title that sounds as 90s Is that does, you know, but even Rachel's Holiday like this, that was Rachel's Holiday, but it's really about rehab. So you know, the books are a lot deeper. And I it was really interesting to see how, you know, she's aged them over time.

Kaytee Cobb 15:22

Yeah, I think that's so fun to to see how authors revisit their characters as the characters age and as the author grows in herself or himself as well. I'm glad you brought that one for us. Roxanna. My first one this week is a middle grade pick. And I hinted at this book a few months back, but today I'm gonna give it a full treatment as we say. It's Beneath the Swirling Sky by Carolyn Leiloglou. So when I brought this for the first time, it was part of my bookish moment, I took my middle son, Levi to the ER and I had forgotten to bring anything to read. So I started reading to him from his current Kindle book, which happened to be the very middle of this book that I'm now having read all the way through. Now, it comes out in about two weeks from when this episode airs, so it's a much better time to bring it to the show. Here's the setup. Vincent is our main character, and he's sent with his little sister Lily to his great

uncle Leo's house for the week, so his parents can go on a trip together. He has recently abandoned his passion for art like fine art after getting his heartbroken over it. So even though Leo is a master conservator of famous paintings, that's the great uncle Vincent has big plans to play video games and talk on the phone. That's it. That's all he wants to do for this week. Except there's no Wi Fi and bad phone service. So he's resigned to a full week of boredom. Thankfully, his cousin or second cousin or just some weird homeschool kid, kidding, her name is Georgia is there, she is a second cousin. So they hang out and pass the time and she keeps Lily entertained, and all is going really well until Lily disappears into a painting. And not just any painting, Starry Night by Vincent Van Gogh, who is of course the artist that Vincent himself was named after. It turns out that Vincent's parents and his entire family are part of the restorationists. Some of the last ones in the world restoration, this have been hiding their ability to travel through paintings, and his especially his parents have been hiding it from Vincent because it can be really dangerous, especially with the counter enemy. Here, the villains, the Distortionists are out there as well. Distortionists modify paintings from the inside. So they go inside with paint, and they change the content of the painting. They fill them with perils, like holes that have no bottom that you could just fall into until you die of starvation. And they change what the regular person outside the painting feels when they see it. So they might not be able to see that it's been changed, but it doesn't feel the same way that it did. When the author first made it. It sits differently in your heart if a distortion is has messed with the inside of the painting, very cool. None of that matters, though. It's dangerous, but Lily is only six years old, and they have to get her back. Thankfully, Georgia who is named after Georgia O'Keeffe knows the ropes of the restorationist world because her parents brought her into it, and she's willing to help out. Levi, my kiddo was so excited when I told him I was reading this one, it was sent to me by Bunmi, my partner in our Patreon content known as Trope Thursday. She's the editor for this book, and wanted to pass it along to me. We've I was the perfect middle grade age, he just turned 10. He loves art, so I knew it would be a hit for him. And I was right. He gave it five stars and loved the entire thing. For me, I love the idea of being able to travel through paintings, and see the brushstrokes come to life around you, especially famous artists, she references so many paintings that you've either seen in an art book or seen on the walls of a museum yourself. I also loved the travel mechanism and the way it worked, you can enter through one of Vincent Van Gogh's paintings and leave through the sides and then enter a corridor where his entire work lines the halls. So you can go to let's say sunflowers in a field and enter that painting and leave it and show up in a different museum. So you can be moving around the world, you can be moving through time. It's very exciting the way that this travel works. Vincent also has a number of fears and self doubt that he's trying to work through. And he has to overcome them in this book, which makes it a great read for a lot of kids. I do want to note that Waterbrook which is the imprint publishing, this one is a Christian imprint, and there are some Christian themes within the context of the story. For me, no big deal for Levi, no big deal. But I could see how a kid or an adult might be like, Well, wait a minute, I didn't expect Jesus to show up. Overall. I really liked it. Levi loved it. In fact, he provided a quote for the marketing materials which he's so proud of that he's just telling random people about it when he gets the chance. If you've got an art loving kid especially or if you are an art loving adult, I think this will be a great one to pick up. It's Beneath the Swirling Sky by Carolyn Leiloglou.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 20:10

my God. It's like you're speaking directly to my soul Kaytee. Honestly, you could not have picked a more perfect book. I love art. I love the idea of going through paintings. My favorite artist is Vincent van Gogh. My second favorite artist is Georgia O'Keeffe.

Kaytee Cobb 20:27

Oh, nice.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 20:29

Oh my god. Oh my god, this sounds amazing. And I have when you said middle grade I thought wow. Like I've been looking for a really good middle grade lately. But I'm finding either kind of magical fantasy or like very realistic kids going through kind of discovering who they are stuff and not a lot in the middle. Right and I read the thief snort which I bought a little while ago, which I really loved and I was looking for kind of another book that I would love a middle grade and this sounds perfect. So I think I'm gonna pick this up next.

Kaytee Cobb 21:02

Oh, I'm so glad to hear that again. This one comes out very soon. She already is working on the second one which will center on the works mostly of Georgia O'Keeffe. So it sounds like this series is just going to be like Roxanna catnip the whole way through for you.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 21:15

Total catnip talking about specific tropes that really speak to you. This one is definitely it's one of those I didn't know I love till you talked about it. And I was like, yep, that's for me.

Kaytee Cobb 21:24

Perfect. I love it. Can't wait to hear what you think. All right, let's hear about your second book.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 21:29

Okay, so the second book is not going to be quite as ecstatic as we have been so far, but I promise it's a good one to stick through for for my second book, I'm going to be talking about The Perfumist of Paris by Alka Joshi. So this is the third book in the very popular trilogy by Joshi, starting with The Henna Artist. And you might remember that the second book called The Secret Keeper of Jaipur, was one of my favorite books of 2022. But I'm sorry to say that this one didn't quite hit it for me. But it was a big hit for a lot of people. It has a 4.19 rating on Goodreads. So I think my problems with that are very specific. So I'm going to talk about it because I do think many listeners will love it as much as the other books in the series. So I just want to kind of outline what worked for me and what didn't and that way listeners can decide if it's for them or not. Here's the setup. This is straight from the blurb because I found it did a really good job with this case. It's Paris in 1974. Radha our main character is 32. And living with her husband, Pierre, and their two daughters. She's still craves for the baby boy she gave up years ago, but she loves being a mother and she's finally found her passion, the treasure trove of scents. When she's offered a job at a perfumery, she discovers she has a talent: she can find the perfect fragrance for any customer who walks in the door. Now. 10 years later, she's working for a master perfumer, helping to design completely new fragrances and building her career one scent at a time. She only wishes Pierre could understand her need to work. She feels his frustration at her not staying home full time. But she

can't give up this thing that drives her, tasked with her first major project rather travels to India, where she enlists the help of her sister Lakshmi and the core designs of Agra. Women who use the power of fragrance to seduce teas and entice. She's on the cusp of a breakthrough when she finds out the son she never told her husband about is heading to Paris to find her upending her carefully managed world and threatening to destroy a vulnerable marriage. So there's a lot going on there is actually a super interesting premise. And so I was very excited to read this one. So here's what I liked about it. The details of the perfumery in Paris were amazing. I loved learning about how perfumers make scents, how they use something called a perfume organ to keep all their scents organized. Joshi did a lot of research for this part of the book and it shows it was super interesting behind the scenes stuff to me. I also love the part where she goes to Agra to learn more about the scents and discover the origins of so many scents there. So Joshi describes the scents so beautifully in evocatively all throughout the book. So if you love scents, this is a great one. She just does such a great job all throughout the book, it really does evoke, you know, even if you haven't smelled the specific scent, she has a great vocabulary around them, and it really pulls you in. And then again, she has her trademark family relationships and dynamics here. So all that sort of check, check check. Now here's what I didn't love about it. I loved Secret Keeper of Jaipur because at its heart that book was a mystery. And that's what kept turning the pages for me. This one is not a mystery. It's more of a straight family drama like her first The Henna Artist, which for me isn't as interesting. But you know, it's interesting to millions of readers. So because a lot of people's love The Henna Artist and I've heard from others that if they like The Henna Artist, usually you know people liked the first one or the second one. So if you like The Henna Artist interesting, then this one might be for you. The thing I really didn't like about it is I hate books. This kind of goes back to that first book I was talking about I hate books where the main character refuses to stand up and be accountable for the decisions they've made. You know, I don't mind if they make bad decisions, that's kind of the nature of how books work. But I think you have to stand up and be accountable. But here rather just avoid conflict and her own roles and things. In fact, one scene where there's a very big secret from her past and her present and they collide, and she literally leaves the room and goes to take a nap because she didn't want to deal with it. She either does that or goes out with her best friend. And that just infuriated me. So, you know, that's highly specific to me. But I want to bring that up, in case, you know, bothers other people. And then I'll say the last thing and kind of the biggest thing is that Josh's books, as I said, are known for a lot of interconnecting plot lines and lots of family and friend relationship drama. There are some cliched plot lines here that I think Joshi threw in, because her editor said like, you need more drama near the end. So there's a few very kind of just, you know, have been used a million times

Kaytee Cobb 25:58

the distance that your eyes just rolled back in your head, tells me everything I need to know, you know,

Roxanna Kassam Kara 26:03

and I'm not gonna say because technically, it's a spoiler, but it's the oldest trick in the books, you're just like, Okay, I'll throw that one in, and I'll throw that one in. And I just feel like they were kind of ill conceived and jammed in and it just would have been better without it. You don't need to ratchet up the tension with cliched plot lines. And I feel like it could have been better if she had left those out. But I will say all those problems aren't you know, could be relatively small for other readers, and they're specific to me. So if these aren't issues for you, you might really enjoyed this book. And this one, like the

previous one I talked about, you don't have to read the previous books in the trilogy to enjoy this one, though, it does help to understand all her characters and their relationships. So that's *The Perfumist of Paris* by Alka Joshi.

Kaytee Cobb 26:45

I think it's so fun that now you've subverted this we are not animals thing twice with Series books where you're like, Yeah, you don't need to read the rest of them. That's fine.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 26:55

Do you see why I'm not doing this episode with Meredith?

Kaytee Cobb 26:59

Yes, I do. I

Roxanna Kassam Kara 27:00

take it personally.

Kaytee Cobb 27:02

I love that. All right. Well, while you were talking about the scent organ especially it made me think of *The Scent Keeper* by Erica Bauermeister. Did you read that one?

Roxanna Kassam Kara 27:11

I haven't. And it's funny, as I was putting this together, I was like, you know, which would be a good book to read after this. *The Scent Keeper* by Erica Bauermeister. Because I've heard I've heard that's a great one.

Kaytee Cobb 27:20

Yeah, if you are drawn in by stories that evoke the sense of smell that one sounds like it might be a very good pairing for this one, either as a as just a pairing or as a swing up afterwards or whatever experience you had with this book. It just might be a fun way to pair some more like nasal adventure

Roxanna Kassam Kara 27:42

based adventure adventures.

Kaytee Cobb 27:45

Lovely. Or you could read the book that Meredith talked about last week about the allergies to pollen that just went completely overboard, which now I can't pull the name out of my head, but

Roxanna Kassam Kara 27:55

Oh, I heard that. No, I get I get seasonal allergies. So there's no way I'm touching that one

Kaytee Cobb 28:01

to trigger. All right. Okay, my next one actually kind of follows your women in midlife theme Roxana which is why I chose it today. It's called I Feel Bad About My Neck by Nora Ephron. Have you read this one?

Roxanna Kassam Kara 28:15

I haven't. But it's been on my list. I've heard great things. And I love Nora Ephron.

Kaytee Cobb 28:18

All right, perfect. So this is an essay collection by Nora Ephron one of my and maybe your favorite writers and directors of all time. If you're a child of the 80s, or the 90s, or even the 70s and enjoyed stuff like Sleepless in Seattle, you've got mail or When Harry Met Sally, you know in love Nora Ephron even if you don't think you do that humor in those romantic comedies that defined My youth is fully on display. In this essay collection. Nora is so relatable even when her writing smacks a little bit of privilege. It just has that flavor underneath it. In the very first essay, which is called I hate my purse. She talks about the unending struggle to find a purse that is both useful and also doesn't turn into a dumping ground for trash and receipts and lollipop sticks and all kinds of whatever detritus, especially moms find in their purse, she talks about a strudel place that she ate at once in New York City, and the way that she kept searching for it long after her favorite shop closed. One of my favorite essays still wholly applicable today, 17 years after it was published talks about the various ways that many women maintain themselves with various beauty treatments and routines, the amount of time we spend doing things we don't even really like to our bodies in order to make them more palatable in some way or another. And the recurring regularity of those activities right some things are daily some things are weekly, sometimes you get your hair cut or dyed and that has to happen on a so many weak bases or you have to get your face lasered, or whatever else is going on in the beauty routines of women, especially when I mentioned her privilege, I especially mean when Nora talks about her apartment and apartment building, which is in New York City. She loves it wholeheartedly, and it's rent controlled for the majority of her time there. She talks about the way the rent increases and when and how much people around her are paying and how she is like so lucky because her rent is so low, but then the rent increases come for her. It's very much in the vein of this didn't affect me. So I didn't care about it until all of a sudden it did affect me and I found myself caring about it, which we see reflected in a lot of areas of modern life. But when she gets back into her humorous forte have comedic observations about life, including the one where she worked in the White House when JFK was president, and she presumed she was the only young woman that he never made it past that. She left me rolling with laughter I was regularly nodding my head and solidarity, or bringing myself to tears with delight at her writing. The title of the collection reflects the overarching theme of womanhood, and especially womanhood after the young ingenue stage of life, which many of us find ourselves in. Many of our listeners are within that middle age range, the way she talks about the ups and downs of cooking and parenthood and living in the big city, bring a lightness to topics that may otherwise either overwhelm or bore the reader. And this reader really enjoyed it. Even the cover was just delightful. It's I Feel Bad About My Neck by Nora Ephron.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 31:20

Okay, now that's on my TBR too. I do love Nora Ephron, and I love essay collections, as you know, and I've had this on my list, but I haven't risen to the top. But as you just talked about it like I could see Meg Ryan strolling through New York City in you know, that movie with Tom Hanks. You've Got Mail, all of them with all of them. Exactly. All of them. And I just thought, yeah, especially I don't know why fall seems like the perfect time for that. So I'm gonna I'm gonna put that on my list. Thank you.

Kaytee Cobb 31:47

Yes. Okay, I've sharpened pencils in the form of Nora Ephron's writing. Yes, yes, that is what I need carefully. If I got you twice. This is so excited. Totally.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 31:58

Okay, well, my final book doesn't seem like a Kaytee book. I'll tell you this. But I think it's one I had to bring the show because I think it's it's one that's underrated, that I think really love underrated specifically by members I think of Currently Reading not necessarily outside my final book is Open Book by Jessica Simpson.

Kaytee Cobb 32:16

Interesting. Okay.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 32:18

So you know, I always bring a memoir in my third spot on Currently Reading I don't know why it's just become a tradition. But usually, it's a memoir about a real out there experience. You know, it's an astronaut or a cave diver or a tea explorer. But today, I'm bringing you a memoir about a pop star, which is not what I normally read. I do not read celebrity memoirs as a rule, but I wanted to bring this for two reasons. First, to entice all those people who say they would never read a memoir. And second, for those who do read memoirs, but never would pick up a celebrity memoir like me, to tell them to give this one a second look. First, let me just say this upfront, I barely know who Jessica Simpson is. I've never listened to her music. I couldn't name you a song. I vaguely remember her doing a reality show on MTV many years ago. And that's kind of the some of my knowledge. But I still found this memoir vastly entertaining. And I think you will, too. So here's the setup. This is the story of Jessica Simpson's life from growing up in 1980s, Texas, to becoming a pop star during the era of 90s, blonde pop stars. Think Britney and Christina to starting a billion dollar clothing business. Along the way, she talks about her childhood sexual abuse, or addiction or alcoholism, as well as the media body shaming her and her difficult relationships. So all this sounds pretty standard for a celebrity memoir, not to trivialize her experiences in any way or say that they're not significant. But this is kind of the stuff you get from a celebrity memoir, and not something I would normally pick up to be honest. But what everyone needs to know is that Jessica Simpson really spills the tea about herself and about others. So you know, all the best parts of the podcast like this is this is this memoir, you know, she talks about unsuccessfully auditioning for the Mickey Mouse Club with Ryan Gosling and Justin Timberlake. And what they were really like, she talks about Britney and Christina and what it was like competing in that very select echelon of young blonde, sexualized pop stars of the 90s where she was kind of like a distant third, she really spills the tea about John Mayer and their disastrous relationship and what a garbage human being she thinks he is. So this is celebrity true telling, honestly at its best. Nice. So I listened to this during long walks in the early pandemic days. And truthfully, it was the only thing that could hold my

attention and lift me out of my life. I was just so wrapped up in her world. She had a really good you know, not to put down her writing, but she's written it with a really good ghostwriter. So it really is written in a way that pulls you all the way through, and it's not great literature. You're not going to remember this for delivery. serve your life. It's not like a Viola Davis, you know, I'm not trying to sell it at that level. But to me This is in case of emergency break glass book, if you are having a major book hangover, and you don't know what to pick up, if you can't find anything on audio that you like, if you're in a book slump, if you're going through some heavy life events, and you need some distraction, something you can listen to, while your kids are talking to you in one year. This is the book for you. Just try it. And I dare you not to get hooked after the first chapter. It's just it really is very absorbing. It's probably one of the most absorbing books I've ever read. So as I said, some notes, I would listen on audio and recommend the experience. Jessica herself narrates it, she includes a track from her album at the end, which people seem to love. But truthfully, I just skipped it, because I really don't care. I just wanted I don't care about her music. I'm sure she makes wonderful music, but it just it's not while I was listening to it, but listening to her story, in her own words, was what really wrapped me up in this book. So I wanted to see if people would give this a try. And you know, in our Facebook, bookish friends, a lot of people not a lot, but a few bring this up as a gem. And I can feel everybody being like, Oh, okay. Sure. Yeah, maybe. And so I wanted to give this a full treatment, because I think it's it is a great after Boxtop book that everybody should be on everybody's radar. And that is Open Book by Jessica Simpson.

Kaytee Cobb 36:25

Okay, Roxanna, I'm really glad that you brought this because I have seen those posts where people are like, this was surprising and excellent. And I feel like I identify quite a bit with you here in that the podcast is pretty much everything I know about pop culture, like I don't have regular time at the movies, or I don't listen to a lot of music. I don't know, even most of the names that they mentioned on the show. I'm there for Knox and Jamie. So I don't have like this broad reference point of pop culture, which is the only reason that even though I love memoir, I love a well done memoir, I love a memoir written and read by the person. I haven't picked this one up. But everyone I've ever heard talked about it has said, this one's really good. I just was not interested because it's pop culture and like, whatever, you know, like, just doesn't interest me that much. But you being able to say, Listen, I'm not like a fan girl. I don't listen to her music. I didn't know her biography prior to picking this up. Really, that means something to me, because that means it was enjoyable for you without that background knowledge. And it could be enjoyable for me as well without that background knowledge. So I appreciate that.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 37:38

Well, I'm so glad because that's exactly what I wanted to say. You don't need to know pop culture. And you don't have to care about Jessica Simpson. Not that she's not a lovely person. And I'm not you know, trying to say that, but I cared about the story and what she brought out in it and like, you know, really all the tea, she spilled. And I loved all that early 90s stuff. And she has some really she does have some powerful things that have happened her life which she treats with, you really kind of get a sense of what she's gone through. She also has some ridiculous things that have happened in her life. Like she went to acting school where the acting teacher was Chuck Norris. And he told her that she should be more like Denzel Washington by lifting her eyebrows more I can't remember exactly, but it was just the most absurd, absurd story. But just giggling and going what through the whole book, and I, you know, can't say I know any more about Jessica Simpson. Now that I'm done in terms of what she's

done in her career if she's released another album, but that doesn't matter. It was a great memoir. And it was surprising and it was interesting, and that's what I'm here for. And that's why I want to bring it to readers.

Kaytee Cobb 38:40

All right, I'm excited about that. Okay, my third book is my five star book of this episode. It's *The Monsters We Defy* by Leslye Penelope. So I picked up this title almost a year ago at the Back of Beyond bookstore in Moab, Utah, but I just read it this summer, which is becoming a thing with me. I will admit that the cover is what drew me to this novel. It is gorgeous. Here's the setup. We're in Washington DC in 1925. More specifically the neighborhood area known as Black Broadway. Clara Johnson is our protagonist, and she is able to communicate with spirits. But that gift which got her out of a tough spot in the past, now has her indebted to the spirit world and specifically to the Empress a powerful spirit. She is offered through the Empress the opportunity to absolve her debt and gain her freedom by pulling off a heist. She needs to steal a ring imbued with powerful magic. But Clara is a little puzzled by the assignment because spirits can't interact with physical items, which is part of why they make deals with humans in the first place. So why would the Empress want a ring? She can't do anything with it. She can't touch it. No matter though. Just like any great heist novel, Clara needs to assemble a team to help her a jazz musician who uses music to hypnotize his listeners, an actor who can wear other people's faces like masks in order to gain entry to places he would otherwise not be allowed, and more. Each of them brings a special gift to the table, like a jazz age, Ocean's 11 crew. As they get closer to their goal, the stakes get higher, of course, and the spirit world becomes more and more tumultuous. It could be enough to bring the entire city of Washington DC to its knees. This book is actually the first one that Leslye Penelope wrote under this name. However, she is no stranger to best selling novels and success. She has a large number of fantasy paranormal romance novels and novellas written under her other name, which is L Penelope. Well, I'm glad this was my first of hers, it probably won't be the last. I love the story. The plot was propulsive and entertaining. The writing was really excellent, just pitch perfect for the time and place it was written. And I'm finding more and more that it turns out I really love a heist novel, all the better if it has a fantasy element to it to draw me in. Although that's not necessary. I also loved *Portrait of a Thief* by Grace Li no fantasy elements there at all. Leslye Penelope really expertly weaves in folklore and mythology from the Black community for the story to sing it to life off the page. If there were more to this world, if there were a sequel or a trilogy, I would absolutely pick it up. Although I don't see any hints of that right now on the interwebs good reads the author's website are all silent on that effect. For now. This was a great standalone fantasy heist novel. It's *The Monsters We Defy* by Leslye Penelope.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 41:33

Well, you're right, Kaytee, I looked at it. As you're talking that cover is beautiful. And I'm surprised like this came out in 2022. I've heard nothing about this premise. And just the different characters that you talked about. They sound amazing. Like I would have been on this like catnip. I'm so surprised that you know, we didn't hear anything about it.

Kaytee Cobb 41:52

Yeah. I'm so glad sometimes when the cover is what draws you in. And then it turns out, it really did have something that great inside it like it wasn't a trick. Yeah. Switcheroo. And this was one of those times it was so good.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 42:06

Oh, that's so great. Okay, that's three for three. And I love it when I've never heard of a book and you weren't on my list too. Yeah. So now I've got thanks so much for adding to my teetering. TBR I know what I'm doing in September now.

Kaytee Cobb 42:18

Excellent. I've planned all of Roxanna September. Okay, so those were our six current reads. And now we're getting into this deep dive that Roxana suggested that is a little inspired by her current reads today, but I'm excited to get into it. It's kind of a juxtaposition, similar tropes, we love to hate. So there might be an overarching trope with regard to a novel and we don't necessarily mean romance in this area. But sometimes there's a little division within that trope. And one fork diverges on wood and leads to a trope we love. And another one leads to one that we hate, even though there you have like the same grandparent, right. That's what we're talking about here. And I think this will be interesting for readers to hear about and start to think about in their own reading lives. So Roxanna, why don't you start us out with your inspiration for this?

Roxanna Kassam Kara 43:06

Okay. Yeah, that's such a great way to put it. Kaytee and I talked about this leading up so I won't spend too much on it. But I have realized that I love female characters in midlife productively working through their craft. I wonder why because I'm a female character in midlife productively. And not productively like checking off checkboxes, but like saying, owning, okay, this is my stuff. And I'm working through it, like Happiness for Beginners, like, Again, Rachel, like The Shell Seekers. What I do not like, as I said, you know, when the second book I talked about is characters that don't work through their stuff, and then just kind of avoid it. And just hope it all resolves itself, or characters that don't work through it, and then just pull everybody into their cyclone of dysfunction. So like rich people behaving badly books, I know, those are really big, and a lot of people love them. But I like functional families. I don't like dysfunctional families. So anything that has kind of a whirlpool of toxic dysfunction is not for me, and it's great for me to know, because then when books like The Nest or Pineapple Street or something come out, I can easily say, okay, that's going to work for a lot of people, but it's not going to work for me. That's why I think it's important to know the specifics of what works for you. So you can identify books like that when they come out.

Kaytee Cobb 44:21

Definitely. Are there keywords or something where you're able to identify those books ahead of time, like The Nest and Pineapple Street? Is it the rich people behaving badly? Yes, like text in the blurb or is it something else?

Roxanna Kassam Kara 44:32

Yeah, it's usually I can tell because that's how people describe it. You know, I read Pineapple Street and the first chapter, there was a character who wore a white shirt and black pants to an event and everybody thought she was a caterer. And I was like, Yeah, I've seen this many times. Like, I don't need to read this. And not to say there were some really insightful parts in it. But for me, I knew okay, I don't like cliches that show up in writing. And I don't like when it's this kind of like, oh, well, I'm the I'm the person Without privilege, and I'm going to do be witness to all this crap that these privileged people are working through. So I can usually tell them the first chapter, or how people describe it in their Instagram reviews, or things like that. And another one, like I love female characters and midlife working through their stuff. I don't like young adult novels with people working through their stuff, and they don't work through it, like I call those Failure to Launch. So, you know, I think you had brought one

Kaytee Cobb 45:25

Maame by Jessica George, like, as you say that I know exactly what you're talking about,

Roxanna Kassam Kara 45:31

right. And I don't mind like young adults, where they're working through real stuff, especially if it's their own sexuality, of gender identity or race, like all that stuff. Super. I love that. But if it's that failure to launch stuff, I don't know, I just don't find it interesting, probably, because I'm just not in that age range anymore, right. So that I usually look for, too. So you had a broader book Kaytee, a few months ago called Sea Change, which I had started to, but DNF for the same reason, it had a character, and I think I was about a third of the way through. And it just seemed like, she wasn't really going to get anywhere, you know, she's working through her things. But again, failure to launch, which that novel has its own value and its own ways. But for me, I knew it wasn't a fit. So now I kind of know early on in the book, if it has some things that are not going to work for me,

Kaytee Cobb 46:19

okay. All right. So I'm gonna kind of put a car on this train. Because Sea Change is a perfect example of my first one that came to mind for this one. I love a memoir. I love a memoir from a young person. But I'm not a huge fan of what I call messy middle memoirs, which is kind of what you're talking about here. I have the hardest time with a memoir that feels like nothing has been accomplished or learned or changed by the end. If you're 35. And you've tried and failed at a bunch of stuff, that's great. But if you haven't turned it around or changed something, then I don't want to read about it, I want you to make more steps forward, right. And I know that's life, like we don't all have pretty bows to put on our wives and say now it's time to write a memoir because I have finally tied the bow around my life, right. But it's not my favorite thing. My most egregious example, when I was writing these notes was Notes From a Young Black Chef by Kwame Onwauchi. He is an excellent young Black chef, he opens this restaurant, it closes very fast. And then he writes a bit more. And now I've followed him for a few more years, and he's doing good things. And I'm excited to see where he goes. And I really would just like to pretend I didn't read that one. And have him released a new memoir in about five years and say, Now, look what I've learned. And look where I've been even when you were talking about open book by Jessica Simpson. She's around our age, right? Young, 40s ish. And I think that the other reason I haven't picked it up yet is because I've been concerned about that part of it. Like, has she gotten far enough through the crap at the beginning of her life, to be able to say like, here's a reflection on what I've learned and where I'd like to be going from here and how I overcame rather than just like, look at, like, unpacking

her suitcase of life drama, and saying, Look at this mess. You know, like, I don't like that. Look at the Smith. That's the messy middle for me.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 48:22

Okay, so, so interesting. Okay, so I have a couple of thoughts on that. I will say for Open Book, because I think a lot of people feel that way. She does try to cap it off with Yes, this is what I have learned. This is how far I've come look at me. I'm sober. Now I've got a husband. And I've got two kids, and I moved on from all this stuff. But then she makes some very serious comments about body image and all the stuff she's doing. And she like, has this I can't remember exactly, but I feel like she has some very critical surgery when her kids are young, just so she can look better or something. And I was just like, that doesn't really sound like you're over your stuff. Like those are very suspect choices to me. But it didn't bother me because I wasn't looking for kind of a redeeming arc to me because I don't really know her and I'm probably not gonna follow her. So I just felt like, Okay, well, I guess you do you then thanks for sharing that stuff. And hopefully, you kind of get all the way through it. And I actually really loved notes from a young buck chef, but I do 100% See what you're saying? I have a little tweak on that. I don't mind if people haven't come to the resolution yet. There has to be some resolution in there. And I think he learned a lot from the restaurant closing. But I don't like when they write it like literally six months after they've gone through something. Right? And they're still raw and open. And you haven't had enough distance from the event. You're kind of writing is a form of therapy. And you know, in R Eric Thomas's book, he talks about how a pastor tells his husband don't bleed all over the congregation. Like don't bring your stuff out and then just it over everybody and I was like, That is such a good message for a memoir. Don't bleed out over the congregation, deal with your stuff, get some learning, and share that learning don't share the, well, this is what happened to me. And can you believe and blah, blah, blah, where there's no learning in it? You know? So I'm 100% with you. There's a few memoirs, I've read like that. And I just thought that person needs the gift of more time and perspective. Before they dove into that really deep and heavy piece.

Kaytee Cobb 50:29

Yeah, it's like if the wound has closed and scarred over, that's when you can share about it. Right? We were having an Off mic conversation, even before we started recording this episode, where we kind of both talked about things that we've gone through in our personal lives in the past six months since we last got to have a solo conversation with each other, and how we're working on it. Yeah, it's in progress. Right. It's not a done deal. And I don't want that in my memoirs. I don't want to be still working on it. I want to feel like well, I might still be working on my stuff. But at least this person has shown me a little bit that it's possible to get past this or through this or make it to the other side. Yeah. Yeah.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 51:08

That's such a good one to bring. All right, what's

Kaytee Cobb 51:10

your next trip that you want to talk about? Okay,

Roxanna Kassam Kara 51:14

so I love team and leadership dynamics in unique environments. So I realized that when I was, you know, there's a few books I've read, like, Again, Rachel, you know, when she's talking about all the people in her group that are going through the addicts that are going through rehab, but she talks about the structure of how she kind of gets them through, and her team and how she, how she's a leader in that situation, what she gives them and what she pulls away from, when I read Search by Michelle Huneven, that was a book about a search committee for finding a new pastor for a small church, you know, House of Brede by Rumer Godden, which is all about really a leader who has to kind of bring her group of nuns together, like these things were leaders have to deal with different team members, and kind of keeping everybody motivated or together work keeping everybody kind of in a place where they're happy and content, but not in like a business situation. Just like in life. I don't know why I find those books. So, so interesting. And it took me a while to label that one. Because it's so specific. Yeah. But I find in books like that, that's what I take away from them is like, oh, what interesting leadership what interesting team dynamics. Now I'll put that to contrast. You know, you said where it goes wrong. Where it's like, like toxic. Yeah, like Succession. No, I don't want to see a whole bunch of people fighting with each other just because they're miserable human beings. And we all hate each other at the end, that's no good for me. Not that it has to like it Search. It doesn't necessarily wrap up in a bow. It doesn't have to wrap up beautifully. But people are working hard in something they believe in. That's kind of the the piece that's important to me,

Kaytee Cobb 52:55

I wonder if that is part of now I have to like look at my own reading a little bit. But I wonder if that's part of why I like a heist novel, because it's not a business environment. But it is. There's usually a leader, there's varying interests on this team of people, and you have to kind of work with the best skills of everyone and use them to their best abilities. Now, I'm gonna have to like let that percolate through my head a little bit and see if that's something that is actually a thread that I'm pulling out of these heist novels.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 53:23

Oh, now I have to read that when I read Monsters We Defy I'm gonna have to think about it from that perspective. I didn't think about that. So good one.

Kaytee Cobb 53:30

Okay. The next one for me is in regards to fantasy, which I love, love, love, love, love, love, right? I love high fantasy and urban fantasy and why fantasy and romance messy, especially with winged bat boys, right. But what I don't love is when we can check like box f all of the above. Right? I call these Kitchen Sink books, where it feels like we tried to smash 18 Different tropes into one novel. So if you get me to read a fantasy novel, which is not hard to do, and it turns out that it's a YA romantasy, that's urban and includes a magical being in a war and that's too much. That's too much things right? Most recently, it felt like The mermaid The Witch and The Sea by Maggie Tokuda Hall was like this, but this morning, I finished Immortal Longings by Chloe Gong which sounded so good to me, right. Three stars, Max. I was just completely like, wow, you tried to put every freaking fantasy idea dystopia into one book. And you know, I finished it up and I was like, Wow, I wonder if it's just me. If it's this time of my life. It's very busy. It's hard for me to get long chunks of listening time. Maybe that's what it is. So I wrote my review, and I rated it and then I said, Well, I'm just gonna go look over and over and over again, people said

this book was overstuffed, that it was info dumping with regard to her world building and the number of things that happen within this story, that it could have been culled way down in order to make it in to a more streamlined, and whittle away some of those other tropes that that distracted from her main storyline. So no kitchen sink book for me, thank you, I prefer a more focused storyline that might go deeper, but not broader into the fantasy realm especially, which was I feel like the most egregious offender in this area.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 55:22

That's so interesting because I also read Immortal Longings got a third of the way through was super excited, like push through, because I was like, nobody really said, This is amazing. And then this was early on before I'd been released. And then I kind of dug into some of the reviews and read the same thing. And I couldn't get into that world. So I know exactly what you're saying. I wonder if it's an author problem or an editor problem. Like I wonder if it's like, Oh, you want to do this while you know what really markets while with this,

Kaytee Cobb 55:50

these other six things?

Roxanna Kassam Kara 55:53

And I think Meredith might say that with for some of the mystery thriller, she reads, you know, when there's a woman in a cabin, but there's also an old woman who's telling her the story of her life, but then there's also somebody dead in a forest. Like there's all those like,

Kaytee Cobb 56:06

right and a car that won't start and Yes,

Roxanna Kassam Kara 56:09

right. Like she reads a few of those. And she's like, okay, I get it. Like, that's the thing we're doing now. So you just decided to plop it in. And it doesn't add to the story. I don't read a lot of those mystery thrillers. But I for sure see that fantasy. The one thing I will say is, I'm thinking about City of Brass, right, which I read those three books, that trilogy of like 2000 pages or something right here, and I fell into that deep hole, and I loved it, which is very unlike me, I didn't read fantasy before that, or not very much. That book have a lot in it, in fact, so much that Meredith and I really struggled in the beginning, because we were just like, What is going on here, I couldn't get my arms around it, you know. But then I read that the author was a historian in kind of Islamic Middle Eastern history. And she wanted to imbue it with all these kinds of artifacts and systems of political government and like all those things, so it was a lot, but that all brought it to life. For me. I think if they had been all Tropi things, I would have abandoned it. If it was like all those things. You just called out. Mythical Creature underdog, who ends up being romantic interest that ends up being the Shining Armor like if had been those things I would have been out. But this because it was new and unique and surprising in nothing worked in a true way. Everything was completely new. Yeah, that's what kept me reading it.

Kaytee Cobb 57:32

Interesting. Do you have a third one that you want to bring?

Roxanna Kassam Kara 57:36

I do. And this is what you actually alerted me to because I know you feel the exact same way about this one. Characters who avoid their problems through miscommunication, frickin miscommunication. Especially in romance books. Yes, I didn't understand why some I read and why some I threw against the wall. And then I read Annabel Monahans, very popular, Nora Goes Off Script last year, and almost threw my phone against the wall because it was the same to an audio. Because there's a point in that novel where there's multiple points where they're texting each other, and you see the bubbles, like, they're almost gonna see it, and then it goes on for another 200 pages or whatever. Now, I know, people love this book. And it was well written, it was interesting. I liked that premise. I have no problem with the tropes. I you know, it was fine. But you literally could have said one sentence to each other. And you could have just dealt with stuff. Like it's the exact opposite of what I was saying, where people have conversations to deal with stuff. This is where they just don't talk. And then there's one line, he could have said that clear everything up creates a frustration in me that I just can't move past in a book.

Kaytee Cobb 58:44

Yes, if I'm yelling at my book, just tell that person then I know that I'm not going to read it. Well, by the end. It's just gonna make me mad.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 58:53

I sometimes feel like taking my pencil and like writing the line. And yes, I didn't do that I was sick at the time or whatever. Usually, like one line, you don't you're just like, Oh, God,

Kaytee Cobb 59:05

or like, just ask him, right? Because that's the other miscommunication thing where they're just making the assumption. Oh, well, he didn't show up because he actually doesn't love me and better. No, no, do that. Right. Instead, it's just like if you said, Hey, you weren't there. Oh, okay. That's it. That's the whole conversation.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 59:22

Yeah, exactly like that. I just, you know, I get its a popular trope, especially in romance. But I just think there's other ways that you can address it creatively. Now, you know, usually that one's a hard one to suss out, I will say, because usually, that's, you know, it's part of the plot and no one's gonna tell you, they shouldn't tell you that in a review. So it's a hard one to suss out. I usually have to read the whole thing and then I am throwing it against the wall, so that's tough.

Kaytee Cobb 59:46

Yeah, okay. My final one I think you're gonna feel the same way about is the surprise twist that's actually a rug pulled out from under you. So I love a book that keeps me on my toes. I love a mystery, a book that surprises me within the confines of the story, but I don't love a book that changes everything halfway through and expects you to just follow along. So of course, right now I'm talking about Wish You Were Here by Jodi Picoult, which I read in April of 2022. And it's still makes me mad when I think about it. And it's one of those things like you were just saying, Where, if you see that in reviews, even me saying that now, a year and a half later, is probably a little spoilery. To say, Listen, she, she pulls the

rug out from under you, somebody else is going to read that book and be like, Well, I kind of knew there was something coming, because I just said that out loud. That's why I picked one from a year and a half ago. But I hate when an author does that and says, Oh, yeah, every thing I just told you in this story was a lie. None of that was true. It was whatever it was whatever plot device they use to show you that everything was actually not true that they were telling you. And now follow me again, please, as I take you down a new path and that and by that point, they've broken my trust. I do not appreciate that journey that the author is trying to take me on. And yeah, I just do not pull the rug out from under me. Okay,

Roxanna Kassam Kara 1:01:11

I have a couple follow up questions. How did you feel about Life of Pi then? I do remember loved

Kaytee Cobb 1:01:16

Life of Pi. But I read it at least 15 years ago, so I don't even know if I remember the twist.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 1:01:23

Okay, okay. And what about Gone Girl? Okay,

Kaytee Cobb 1:01:26

Gone Girl, I also loved because it felt like it worked within the story, like you had a lot going on with these characters. And you didn't know who to trust the whole way through. So the book felt organic to not trusting anyone. What really gets me is like, it turns out, this is a book she was reading. Or it turns out, this is a dream that she had. And none of this story actually happened. Where it's not that I twisted the story, it's that I as author have been lying to you. And I'm going to make it okay by couching it within the confines of this other plot device, like a dream or a book within a book or whatever it is. That's what really gets me there.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 1:02:14

Okay. Okay, so I'm 100% with you. So I was with you. And then I was thinking, Wait, actually, I love when authors do this really well. Like in Life of Pi where he goes through this big adventure, and then you kind of realize that sorry, for people who haven't read this 20 something year old book with there's a popular movie about, but that kind of blew my mind, as did Gone Girl. But you're right. They weren't kind of silly plot devices that they just turned at the end. Oh, was it dream? Oh, I just it was a book. It was like they had thought about that all the way through. And you could read kind of you could go back and then read the book again. Yeah, and then be like, why? I can see that. Oh, my God. I love that. You know? Yes.

Kaytee Cobb 1:02:53

All right. Interesting. Okay, so I thought that was really fun. I think that was fun to think through as a thought exercise to so I recommend listeners readers, if you were listened to us and you were like, Oh, actually, I love that. Think through your own. Tell us what your own thing is with regard to books that seem similar on the surface, but then diverge somehow and one you love and one you hate. We want to hear about it. But now for now, we're gonna go over to the fountain and make some wishes. Roxanna, what is your wish?

Roxanna Kassam Kara 1:03:24

Okay, I'm excited to bring this one. It's September, as I said, well, not quite September, but almost there. In my mind. It's September. And you know, I keep a commonplace notebook, which is where I write down quotes that I love ideas I have I keep them all together. Well, Kaytee, have I got a notebook for you? Let me tell you. It's the most bougie notebook you have ever seen in your entire life. But it brings me such joy. It's the William Hannah notebook from the William Hannah company in England. I brought mine here to show you I still have it in its beautiful cardboard box and then it comes with this tissue and like this, you know, full cardstock card and then you pull out the journal and it's got this beautiful leather cover. I have mine which is Bordeaux leather on the outside. And the inside is petrol suede. It's like this beautiful teal, they call it petrol. And you can customize whatever colors you want. So like on the website, you can see like whiskey on the outside if you should suede or chocolate, brown and lime and it's just very fun to see the colors. And then my favorite part is that I have like monogrammed mine with Rkk right in the corner there. And so it's like my notebook, nobody can touch it. And then inside it's got these thick metal rings that are kind of built into like the binding of the notebook. And so then the paper it's not a three ring, three hole ring. It's a disk bound so the papers kind of slide in and out very easily. And then you can kind of slide them in and that way you can move them Right. So like, I'll sometimes write quotes, but then I have different categories. So I can move the pages within the, the notebook wherever I want. And it's kind of the most creamy, delicious paper I've ever seen. You can pick like, I have some lines, I have some grid, I picked, like some graph, and they pick the colors. So I was like, I want the graph in green, and I want the grid in orange. And I want like, just ridiculous levels of customization. It's the Rolls Royce of an Uber, okay, and so is it over the top and completely unnecessary. Like, of course, it's absurd. I'm not saying people need this. But if you really love notebooks, just give yourself a cheat and go to the William Hannah website. And just check out the color options just as a fantasy escape like cobalt leather with aquamarine suede inside, just take a look because it's pressure this. Honestly, it's so fun. I mean, I get I gave mine to myself as a birthday gift. Many years ago, I still have it. When my old ceo retired, we got her a book that was whiskey, leather, and then fuchsia suede. And so it just makes a really nice, like holiday gift or graduation gift. Or just really, like, you know, sometimes I'll go on websites and look at preposterous stuff just to look at it. And then you know, it's just a fun kind of escape. So they are expensive. They're I think, 100 pounds, a notebook. So you know, for a notebook. I mean, you use it forever, because you can replace the pages. But it is preposterous, but it's fun to just to go to the website and take a look and play around. So I thought September was the best time for that. So I just wanted to share. Awesome.

Kaytee Cobb 1:06:38

So do you have any? Sometimes when I get a really pretty journal and for me and my non bougie taste, I mean like a \$12 journal instead of a \$4. But sometimes when I get one that's really beautiful. I'm like, well I can't write in this yet because I want the perfect thing to put in it. You're not facing any of that doubt. It sounds like you know

Roxanna Kassam Kara 1:07:00

what, because this has pages you can pull out I'm actually okay with it. So I you know, I do that, but I don't use it for everything. I will say my favorite like this is okay kind of absurd over the top. My favorite ones are the Filofax notebooks, which I think in the US are like 12 bucks a notebook. And they're also

the pages come in and out. They're really thin, they come in beautiful colors. And I use those flights are also really easy to carry places. And they're just fun. So I don't, I don't have a whole row of these notebooks. Like my one. And the rest are usually honestly from the dollar store or from filofax. So those are the ones I usually use. But I do this one is actually I kind of forced myself to write it because I didn't want to save it. And then like never write in it. And I've started a habit of journaling three pages a few times a week. So now I say well, I have got to write because I gotta I've got to use up these beautiful notebooks that I just like to save, and I've got to write in them. So I'll do that.

Kaytee Cobb 1:07:56

Okay, I love that. All right, mine is a much smaller, which, in fact, is actually physically tiny. So I wish that I could give out staff picks like a bookstore employee, just in my regular life. I think I might actually make this happen. But I've been thinking about it for a while. I carry around currently reading business cards with me, which my husband requested because he recommends the podcast quite often at work, which was so sweet and cute of him, I loved it. So I keep a few in my purse as well because I had to order 100 or something. But I think I might order another set and change the back to be a staff pick card like you find on a shelf talker at the bookstore. So that way when I'm living my best extrovert life out in the world, and eavesdropping or chatting with someone at a bookstore or just being generally like compelled to make a book recommendation, I can take out a podcaster pick card and write the title and author for the person as well as why I think they'd love it. And then they have currently reading on the front. And my recommendation to them on the back. It's a double win. But I'm going to tie this back even further to my bookish moment and wonder aloud if I left them in library books as a book pairing option like when we talked about *The Scent Keeper* versus *The Perfumist* would they get thrown out and I kind of I want librarians to write back and say if I found that in a library book I would leave it there for the next patron or no we throw out everything that goes into a library book because I don't want to like waste my time making book pairing recommendations but I love living my best book recommendation life and I think this would be a really fun way to do it. So I think I'm going to make it happen staff pick podcasts or pick business cards that I can tuck into books or hand to people when I feel that they need a book recommendation.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 1:09:38

I love that idea. I thought where you were going with this is we're gonna go all guerrilla and actually go to bookstores and just start just dripping on your stuff onto bookstores, which actually I think that can be fun to well and I think they might love it now people who work in bookstores will tell us but I feel like you know if there was a really enthusiastic reader who was like podcaster pick and they put it against one of the books. Like I actually think that would be really fun, right? And like a way to kind of bring community into it. But I really love that idea. I've seen it in little free libraries a couple of times. Okay, like this book was great for this reason, like when you're looking through them, and it's it's actually inspired me to read a couple books because I was like, wow, this person really liked it, you know. So I think that's a great idea.

Kaytee Cobb 1:10:23

All right. Well, hopefully we make it happen. Somebody gets a notebook, somebody gets a staff pic card, everybody goes away. Happy. That is it for this week. As a reminder, here's where you can

connect with us. You can find me Kaytee at @notesonbookmarks on Instagram and Meredith is at @MeredithMondaySchwartz on Instagram.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 1:10:40

And you can find me Roxanna at @Roxannathereader on Instagram full show

Kaytee Cobb 1:10:44

notes with the title of every book we mentioned in the episode and timestamps, so you can zoom right to where we talked about it can be found on our website, currentlyreadingpodcast.com.

Roxanna Kassam Kara 1:10:53

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Kaytee Cobb 1:11:06

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Roxanna Kassam Kara 1:11:23

audience and we'd love your reviews and all your comments. Thank you so much for that

Kaytee Cobb 1:11:26

until next week. May your coffee be hot

Roxanna Kassam Kara 1:11:29

and your book be unputdownable.

Kaytee Cobb 1:11:31

Happy reading Roxanna,

Roxanna Kassam Kara 1:11:32

happy reading Kaytee