



Season 4, Episode 2: Books with Great Titles + Auto-Buy Authors

Mon, 8/9 • 57:00

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:10

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

Kaytee Cobb 00:24

We are light on the chitchat, heavy on the book talk and our descriptions will always be spoiler free. We'll discuss our current reads, a bookish deep dive, and then we'll press books into your hands.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:34

I'm Meredith Monday Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas. And as a reader, I am loyal to a fault.

Kaytee Cobb 00:42

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico and I love to let the library boss me around. This is episode number two of season four. And we are so glad you're here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:53

Kaytee, I don't know if you do you like to let the library boss you around. Do you really?

Kaytee Cobb 00:56

I like to let the library have a little bossiness in my reading life.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:02

Okay, maybe it can have a say in your reading life?

Kaytee Cobb 01:05

Yeah, maybe I shouldn't have said love. I should have said I like to let the library boss me around.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:10

Right? Well, there are a lot of people who completely let the library boss their reading round, which I think is a really interesting way to go about making your choices. But that's not what you and I do.

Kaytee Cobb 01:19

But there's also lots of people who let us boss them around....So.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:23

Oh, that's true. But that's smart.

Kaytee Cobb 01:25

Yes. All right, guys, for our deep dive today, we want to let you know that we are going to be talking about our auto-buy authors. This is something that we that we've had our Bookish Friends talk about before that they've asked us about before. So we wanted to spend a whole deep dive talking about it. But before we do that, like we always do we want to get started with our bookish moments of the week. And Meredith, what do you got for us?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:46

All right, well, I have my main bookish moment of the week and then I have a little kind of notable note that I want to squeeze in just a little bit for my bookish moment of the week. So my main bookish moment of the week came, I mentioned last week that I had spent some time catching up on my book podcast listening. And I've told you guys you know, I listened to several book podcasts. One of my favorite ones is the Australian podcast Diving In. We've talked about on the show before. The more I listen to them, the more I love the two co-hosts and the way that they talk about books, and the more I really respect their kind of readerly insights to the point where they did an episode... It was episode number 36. Their episode number 36. Just I think two weeks ago, they dropped this episode where they did a deep dive on Wuthering Heights. Now, this is the exact kind of episode that usually in a book podcast, I kind of skip, because for the most part, I have my I'm not I have my degree in English, completely, not for the most part. And for that reason, I don't really like to lean into "let's kind of deep dive into a classic". But in this case, it was the fantastic Diving In hosts and they sucked me in Kaytee. Normally, I would have been like five minutes and out, they sucked me in. They had the best conversation about Wuthering Heights. I'm not a Wuthering Heights fan. In fact, I kind of despise that novel. For a lot of really deep seeded reasons. I've read it a few times, have very strong opinions about it. They did such a great job talking about it. And they have strong opinions about it too. Yeah, not all positive. I just really, the longer I do a book podcast, the more I realize how difficult it is or how not everyone has the ability to talk about books like Louise and Virginia do on their show. And they just did a really, really great job so that I just enjoyed it so much. I laid by the pool and listened to them talk about Wuthering Heights, and I got all heated up again. And it was wonderful. I want to squeeze in one more little thing because I've been thinking about a lot this week. So last Thursday, the August Indie Press List episode came out for our Patreon subscribers. \$5 a month to get lots of extra content, including the Indie Press List, which is kind of our flagship Patreon content, where every month a fantastic bookstore independent bookstore, team up with us and they recommend five books for our listeners, right, so that dropped on last Thursday, and our bookstore this month is The Novel Neighbor. And they are doing such a great job both working with us to the Indie Press List for sure. But I also want to say even if you're not interested at all in becoming a subscriber and getting into the Indie Press List thing, follow The Novel Neighbor on Instagram, they're at @novelneighbor. They are a great bookish follow. They do a couple of different social media kind of series, both in video and then in graphic form

that I have found multiple books for my TBR through following them. So I just want to put it out there at @novelneighbor, it's a really fun bookstagram follow.

Kaytee Cobb 05:05

They are a great bookstagram follow. I love the content they put together over there. And, you know, when I asked them, "Hey, can we get some content for our social media when you guys drop the Indie Press List", they had no problem delivering that as well, because they're just, they're great at creating that content. So I'm proud of them. I like working with them.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 05:22

Yeah, they're really, really great, fantastic at what they do, what's your bookish moment of the week?

Kaytee Cobb 05:26

Okay, my bookish moment has to do a little bit with my bite size intro. This is a slightly silly, slightly strange, bookish moment. During our break, I finally got to go back to the library for the first time, right? Opened up for in person browsing, very excited about it. As I browsed the new release shelf, I had a book that caught my eye and bookish serendipity rules say, Well, if it catches your eye, you have to take it home with you, right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 05:49

You do. Yep.

Kaytee Cobb 05:51

I went out of town shortly thereafter so I did not get to it in the time that I had the 14 days for new releases. And before I returned it, I was like, you know, I'm still gonna grab the audio for this. I'm interested in it. It looks good to me, had not read a single about thing about it. Well, turns out that I did have some preconceived notions about it. Because 40% into this book, I kept thinking, why has no one been murdered yet? What is happening in this book? Like, is this the slowest murderous book of all time? What is going on? I was sure that this book was about a vacation home host who either gets murdered, or is a serial killer, which will be a great book.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:28

Well, I know what book it is. And I know, I know exactly what you're talking about. Kaytee, I did the exact as you read it, but I had this. I had the same misconception. Go ahead. Okay.

Kaytee Cobb 06:39

So Super Host by Kate Russo, is not a thriller, you guys. It's not a mystery. It's not a suspense novel. It is a and I quote, "captivating portrait of middle aged relationships and what it means to take a new chance on life", which is fine, great, excellent. But it is not what I wanted. So 40% in that poor Kate Russo, I DNF'd the heck out of that sucker because I was like, "if nobody's dying, I'm out". I cannot with this book. So I, I would like to know if somebody thinks that it would be a good fit for me, because that was not the right time. But also, I would like to plead that if somebody knows of a book about a vacation home rental host that kills people, I definitely want to read that book. So tell me about it. Yes.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:21

Yes, I did the exact same thing with Super Host. I had it on my shelf for a really long time. And I thought forever, that it that it was I guess I didn't think it was a host killing someone I thought it was maybe the host being killed,

Kaytee Cobb 07:35

Right? I would have been fine with that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:37

Right? So but then somehow it came across my, my radar that that's not what it was. So I just I still have it on my shelf. Because you know it. I'm sure it's great for what it is. But it's funny that we both made.... So there's something about the cover or...

Kaytee Cobb 07:53

it looks, it's like very enticing. Instead of it being like, this is just a book about a dude living his life.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 08:02

Right? It doesn't have the AJ Fikry vibe. It has the right The Perfect Nanny or some some aggressive thriller kind of vibe to it. Covers do make a difference. Kaytee, they do.

Kaytee Cobb 08:12

Funny. Alright, let's get into current reads. What did you read recently Meredith? Is it recently? I know we're kind of in your like back catalogue here now.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 08:21

Yes, we always are in my back catalogue, which is really, really good for the listener on a couple of levels. Because that gives me the ability to kind of a little bit pick and choose what three books I want to talk about in a group as opposed to like three that I read back to back but they're not very interesting as a trio. And also it gives me the ability maybe to eschew a book that has gotten a lot of play everywhere else. And you guys don't want to hear about it, but I'm gonna bring one of those this week because I really really liked it and I don't want to miss it. So forgive me for the fact that this is a book that you have seen everywhere and it's kind of a funny story. So I'm going to talk about The Last Thing He Told Me by Laura Dave.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:04

So this is this was a part of our May Indie Press List group, right and this is Fabled. Elizabeth Barnhill from Fabled was choosing the the books and we had it we had all of the book like late April, we had everything set up, right. We knew what books they were going to be, everything was on order all of that. And then one day before the May Indie Press List dropped, we found out that Book of the Month was going to have The Last Thing He Told Me and Reese was choosing it as one of her picks. And we were like, Oh no, now this is going to happen sometimes with The Indie Press List because we just can't predict the future right and we don't have all the information. But in this case, I was really okay with it because I am always we are always looking for smart mysteries and thrillers. Right and this really is kind of as I'm going to call it a thriller because the action is happening in present time as opposed to in

the past, right, which is one way you can differentiate, but it's not popcorn. It's really it's it's smarter than that. And I enjoyed it. So I want to talk about it. So again, you're gonna remember the setup for this, but let me just do it super briefly. So out of the blue one day, our lead character, Hannah, who's newly wed to her smart, successful husband, Owen, she gets a note. From the in this really random way, she gets a note that just says, "protect her". And she knows that that note is from Owen. Now though Hannah is fully confused and freaked out to get this note, she knows that it's referencing Owen's daughter, Bailey, who is 16. Bailey is Hannah's stepdaughter, right? So Hannah immediately starts frantically trying to get ahold of her husband, Owen, but she can't reach him. She's getting more and more panicked. And then Owen's boss at the startup where he worked, is arrested by the FBI. And U.S. Marshals and other federal agents turn up at Hannah's door asking questions she has no idea the answer to. And it becomes clear really fast that something is very wrong and Owen is decidedly not who Hannah thought he was. So Hannah, and her stepdaughter Bailey set out to discover what's actually happening together, which isn't easy, because they have a kind of difficult relationship. But they're bound together because they obviously have to find out what happened to Owen. So they travel from California to Texas and back to figure out who Owen was and why he's disappeared. So I love this because again, we are still in the summer, we are still deep within that period of time that many, many, many of us want to be reading a book that goes down easy. And this is the ultimate milkshake book. It's not super long. It's not overly complicated. It's not overly gory. It's just a ride that keeps you interested the entire time. I really loved the fact...And when Elizabeth recommended this to me, she was saying you're gonna love it because it's set in the northern California Bay Area, mostly Sausalito, which is close to where I lived. And then also Austin. So it has fantastic scenes in both of those places, which for me was extra interesting, because obviously I've lived in both of those places, but you don't need to be familiar with them, with the settings to actually like this book. I liked that it played on the "what happened to my husband" trope without it having an adultery related storyline, which I don't think is a spoiler to say. And I think for a lot of us who don't want to read books where adultery is the kind of thing or at the core. I want to say that because I enjoyed that that wasn't the thing here. I also loved that it's a really cinematic book. And I have heard that it is being bought and made into a film which makes perfect sense to me, because that's how it feels. To me, it very much felt like a book that would easily translate to the screen. And I also loved we're seeing so many of these lately. This is largely peopled by strong female characters, those are the people who are driving the action. I think we all want more and more of that. The other thing that made it stand out to me is I loved the portrayal of the step-parent, step-child relationship. I'm a step-mom to two boys. I raised them from the time that they were really young. So I've been in their life for a long time. And I'm here to say that even in the best case scenario, a step-parent relationship is wonderful. But it can also be really complicated. And I thought that Laura Dave handled it really, really well in this book, she made it real enough that it informed the action of the book without completely derailing it, I thought she did a good job on that. So I highly recommend this one to all mystery thriller lovers out there. If you like Lisa Gardner's books, I think this will absolutely be for you. And if you read and liked No Bad Deed by Heather Chavez, which I talked about few a few episodes ago, this is another really good book that you're gonna want to check out. It's a great, easy, fast summer read that's worth your time. So this is The Last Thing He Told Me by Laura Dave.

Kaytee Cobb 09:37

Oh good, okay.

Kaytee Cobb 14:11

As a bonus to that that was actually the June buddy read pick for the Currently Reading Bookish Friends. So we ended up at the end of June having like almost a two hour long conversation about it with 25 to 30 of us and I did record it. And that is also available to Patrons. So if you read it and you probably want to get all that like extra goodies about it, there's a whole conversation that you can totally chime in on.

Kaytee Cobb 14:17

Alright, my first one this week is called The Escape Room by Megan Goldin. So this is a murder book. This may have been why I was looking for a murder book at the library because I wanted more of that vibe. But what I have here is Megan Goldin writes psychological thrillers and last year I really enjoyed The Night Swim by her. I decided to pick this one up. It's her 2019 release so before that. The premise of this one is pretty awesome. Four work colleagues at a financial firm, where they make butt tons of money get into an elevator together to attend a late night team building exercise. The elevator stops, the car goes dark, and they're then locked into an "escape room" where perhaps not everyone will emerge alive. As their ordeal unfolds, we get to peek behind the scenes at the finance industry through the eyes of one of their previous co-workers, her hiring, her rise at the company and her eventual downfall. This book has elements of The Whisper Network by Chandler Baker, elements of I'm guessing, by the way that Meredith described it The Boys Club by Erica Katz, but I still have not read that one. It's got triggers for sexual assault, sexism, all kinds of isms. While I was interested in it the whole way through, I found it to be overall forgettable. No comparison to The Night Swim, which for me was a huge hit. And I'm still thinking about it a year later. I do think the premise is a great one though. I loved locked room mysteries and thrillers. So if you like those, and you want more of that, but don't want to pick up The Escape Room, I'd recommend the classic And Then There Were None by Agatha Christie, of course, or In a Dark Dark Wood by Ruth Ware, which will both like scratch that itch for you without any of the kind of forgettable elements of this one, where you're just like. Yeah, well, of course that happened. Of course, somebody's got a head injury of like, over and over again, just very predictable. So that one was The Escape Room by Megan Goldin.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 14:34

Alright, so when we're talking about triggers, let me ask you one more question about that book. Are they actually locked in an elevator for the entire book inside an elevator?

Kaytee Cobb 16:41

So it's like four people in like a four by six space. It is very small.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 16:46

They're not in? They're not in an escape room?

Kaytee Cobb 16:48

No. But somebody has taken over the elevator. So some sometimes in like big buildings, they have like a screen in the elevator that shows ads or whatever. Somebody has hijacked that screen. There's like announcements coming through the PA and they have to like put together clues and try and figure out what's going on. So the idea is really great. It is a premise, right? It just didn't feel right for me.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:11

Got it. Okay. All right. That's a bummer. The Night Swim is one of those books that is definitely on my TBR because multiple people have mentioned that as being a real standout. So that's one that I need to I need to pull that off my shelf.

Kaytee Cobb 17:23

People really like it when podcasters read books about podcasting. That's another book that I've got coming up here soon. Okay,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:31

I forgot that The Night Swim was about podcasting. Okay. All right. My next book is something a little bit different. I read All This Could Be Yours by Jami Attenburg. Have you read this book Kaytee?

Kaytee Cobb 17:38

I threw this book against the wall? So I'm interested in what you think.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:47

Did you okay that is really interesting because guess what, I really liked it not five star like not five star like, but I actually very I very much liked it. Let me tell you why. Okay, here's the setup. The patriarch of the Tuchman family is on his deathbed, and his daughter Alex, who's a successful lawyer a mother, sister. She feels that this is her chance to finally unearth the secrets of who Victor, the father is, and what he did over the course of his life in his career. Very quickly and early on, we know that Victor is a power hungry real estate developer and by all accounts a really not good dude. Alex travels to New Orleans to be with the family but mostly she's going to use this as an opportunity to interrogate her tight lipped mother Barbara. She wants to get the goods on how they all basically arrived at this place in their family. This place where dad is dying, and the wife and kids are apathetic at best and relieved at worst. As mom Barbara tries to fend off Alex's questions, she reflects on her life with Victor and we get to be a part of those reflections. Meanwhile, brother Gary is AWOL trying to get a movie career off the ground and his wife, Twyla Twyla is having a nervous, she's a memorable character is having a nervous breakdown and bursting into crying fits randomly all over New Orleans. So this book is rich in the "rich people behaving badly" kind of tropes, if you like that. The idea is that each family member, but I think what the author is trying to tell us is that each family member really needs to sort of grapple with their shared history so that they can do better and that they can do better for the next... for their children. right this is this is the setup. So I read this coming off of two really, really intense murderful books and then Project Hail Mary, which is really intense in a lot of ways. It's a very huggable book, right. So for whatever reason, I very much wanted to be grounded in the prosaic or the very day to day and so this book, part of why I really liked it, I think falls into that it really felt like the right book at the right time. Right, which more and more I'm thinking about that aspect of my reading, okay. So, the other thing is that in the opening section of this book, the daughter Alex says, If I know why my parents are the way they are, maybe I can figure out why I am the way I am. And I think just being super authentic, I have dealt with a lot of issues in the last three years with my family of origin. And it has had a level of effect on me and my emotional sort of core that I never would have expected as a 40, almost 48 year old woman. So this book, to me kind of put on the pages, a lot of what I was grappling with myself. Now

granted, my family is not like, I mean, don't get me wrong, my family's not like the people in this book at all in any way, shape, or form. But the way that they were, were sort of talking about both internally and externally, the things that had happened and the effect that other people's actions, especially our parents actions, even if they're not related to us or directly, like targeted at us, they still very much inform how we behave and see in the world and see the world. And I've been thinking a lot about that lately. And so this book, put this on the page for me. Now it's billed as sort of Succession meets Big Little Lies. This is literally several places I saw this and I thought, this is a horrible overhype. This, that is a really bad description of this book. There's a little bit of Succession vibes just because the dad is so nasty. But there's none of the business stuff from Succession and all in there's no, like it's just a bad overhyped comparison. So but I will say that it has a sense of place that will have you feeling the sweat on your skin as if you were in New Orleans. It has, like I said, incredibly true to life, uncomfortably complicated relationships between parents and children, and between sisters and brothers, and between sisters in law, which I think is a relationship that doesn't get explored enough in fiction. And several quotes that for me, had me saying out loud, you got that right, sister. So I've heard that a lot of people, their complaint is that there were absolutely no people to root for in this book. I do understand it. And it's a valid complaint. But for me the way it was written, I agree that a lot of these people are not likable, but the way it was written, I could understand how they got to where they were. And for me that made this a worthwhile read.

Kaytee Cobb 23:01

If I had a shelf called character driven fiction filled with a-holes, this book would be at the very top of that shelf, not just because the author's last name starts with A but for all those reasons.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 23:13

Yes, right. It definitely has like The Nest vibes. It's got that sort of like a bunch of unlikable people get together because someone is dying or has died there. And that's definitely been kind of a thing lately, but yeah, for me, it was much more of a win than a loss. And that could very well be because it simply spoke to issues that have been on my mind. And this book did what oftentimes books can really do for us, which is to make us feel understood on the page. So this is All This Could Be Yours by Jami Attenburg.

Kaytee Cobb 23:44

So my second one this week is called Love Lives Here by Amanda Jette Knox. This book is confusing for a few reasons. First, this is not a book written by Amanda Knox, who was convicted of murdering her roommate in Italy. That's a different Amanda Knox,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 24:00

That would have been interesting.

Kaytee Cobb 24:01

I know. But it's the first result you get when you Google that name. And it's not the book Love Lives Here by Maria Goff, which is the first result I get when I look up the title of this book, and is actually a Christian book about finding your way in the church. What this book is, is not any of those things. It's a story of family that had not one, but two members come out as transgender within one year. It's a

memoir. It's a story of mistakes and reconciliation. It's a story of love without boundaries or labels. It's a story of marriage and parenting. And again, it's memoir, read by the author if you do the audio that made me cry and laugh out loud. Amanda is the wife and mom and the story. So she is not going through a transition herself. But walking alongside someone who is. And if you're interested in the inner workings of a family or you're interested in being a great ally, or you have questions about the trans community that you don't feel comfortable asking aloud because there are those right this is a great place to start and break your heart wide open. As I've mentioned before, on the podcast, I have a loved one who's very close to my heart that has transitioned over the past year. And this book brought that story to life on the page while also leaving space for our own story, our own doubts and struggles and triumphs and joys and I loved it. I gave it five stars. And I thank Katie Sikkes for recommending it to me multiple times, and then being like, literally, I'm giving you my card number so that you can listen to this one at my library because I could not find it anywhere. And I'm so glad that I finally got to put it into my ears. It's Love Lives here by Amanda Jette Knox.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 25:41

Oh, I'm so glad that that book was helpful in that way. That's that's exactly what I'm talking about.

Kaytee Cobb 25:48

It's Yeah, it was perfect for exactly me.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 25:51

Right, your story or not exactly your story, but enough that you felt like you could see it on the page. And it makes us feel understood or less alone or like the way we feel in all its messiness is okay, right? And I think I think that's great. I'm so glad that you that you found that book. That's great recommendation Katie Sikkess.

Kaytee Cobb 26:13

Katie Sikkes, yes.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 26:14

And and and the recommendation from you, Kaytee, I think that that's, that's gonna be a good one for a lot of people. Okay, so my third book is this I'm so happy with this book for a number of levels, a number of reasons. I finally got a chance to pick up Hollowpox, the third in the Nevermoor series by Jessica Townsend. So it's called Hollowpox: The Hunt for Morrigan Crow is its whole title. So this is the third in the series. But I can give you a little bit of setup here. So as we start our story, a strange and frightening illness has taken hold of Nevermoor. And it turns the infected Wunimals who are the wonderful, fantastic talking animals that we love so much in Nevermoor into really, sort of zombie like vicious animals. And they, when they make that turn, they go on the hunt, and they're hurting, they're really, really hurting people. It's very, very dangerous. And as victims of the hollowpox multiply, obviously, the whole town is getting very panicked. And with the city she loves in that state of fear, Morrigan, our lead character quickly realizes that it's up to her to find a cure for the hollowpox, even if it will put her and everyone in Nevermoor in more danger than they imagined. I, you guys, we have talked about Nevermoor, the Nevermoor series, which begins with the first book called Nevermoor. So many times, it is one of my favorite middle grade series full stops... one of my favorite series, full stop. It's

right up there with Harry Potter, or The Chronicles of Narnia. For me, it's just one of those instant classic series. So it's been so wonderful that all three of the books in the series so far have been really, really good. I've really enjoyed them all. So Hollowpox came out several months ago, I want to say November.

Kaytee Cobb 28:08

Yeah, in late 2020.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:10

Yeah. And I, of course, had pre-ordered it. And then it came and I picked it up, and I was I got 10 or 15 pages then. And I just felt like, Oh, I'm not I just am not being drawn in. And I was very conflicted about it. But I was like, You know what, I'm in a weird space. It's November 2020. For heaven's sake, we're all in a weird space. So I'm just gonna set it aside. And then in late January, I did the same thing, picked it up, and it did not feel right for me. But right around that same time, we got a comment from a listener, a male listener, believe it or not, we're getting more and more of those. And this male listener's name is Michael Westfall. And he said he was talking about there being this concept of instead of just DNFing a book, instead, put it on your TBF pile, which is your to be finished stack. And I loved this is not groundbreaking, but it was groundbreaking for me, because all of a sudden, I was like, This is exactly what we need to do. We need to stop thinking in this binary. I either picked it up and finished it, or I picked it up and DNFd it and so I'm never gonna think about it again. I think we need to get better at sort of picking up a book, maybe realizing early on, it's not it's not the right time for that book. And then sort of patting it on the cover and saying, I'll be back to you later, and then TBFing it, to be finished. I think that's really important because that's what I did here. The third time's the charm. I picked it up. I was absolutely in the mood for exactly what Hollowpox brought to me. It was all the charming magic that we, that we love in Nevermoor. And I loved that this installment had the kind of pandemic adjacent storyline. That was, that was a nice surprise that she couldn't I don't think she could have known about and it's so fun to watch as the series goes along to watch Morrigan Crow become more and more confident with her powers. And to watch all of her unit, Unit 919 get closer and closer together. I really love watching that story arc. I will say that I do think that Hollowpox could have been 25% shorter. I think it would have been absolutely perfect, just 25% shorter. But even with that the pages kept turning. And I raced toward the end to make sure that everything was going to be all right. This series is for sure an auto-buy series for me and I always look forward to getting back to Nevermoor. So this is Hollowpox: The Hunt for Morrigan Crow by Jessica Townsend.

Kaytee Cobb 30:56

I completely agree on on all counts that it could have been a little shorter. But absolutely auto-buy for Jessica Townsend and this whole series. I feel like I've heard and this could be wrong, but there's gonna be nine books in this series. Meredith, is that what you heard?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 31:10

Oh really?

Kaytee Cobb 31:11

Yeah,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 31:11

I have not heard that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 31:12

I know. I know, I heard that there that it's definitely continuing. But I hadn't heard a number. Okay. All right. Well, that's a high bar. Big one, nine books.

Kaytee Cobb 31:20

That's a big one. Yeah. Okay, my third book this week is one that I really, really loved. It's Razorblade Tears by S.A. Cosby. And this is the big buy, the book that I'm bringing to this show. Yeah, before I tell you anything about this book, I want to say that this is a book I listened to on audio from the library. And this past week, I bought my own copy for my shelves. It's one of those books, it's a keeper. It's one that I will spend my money on after I've already completed it, even though I'm not every reader because I want to have it in my home so that I can pull it out on my shelves, flip through it, find pivotal scenes, hand it to somebody I love. It's that kind of book. So I know you've been seeing this everywhere. I know you're probably sick of it by now, but I have to tell you about it. This is S.A. Cosby's second release, and it has absolutely thrust him into the spotlight for good reason. When we start the story, we meet Ike. He's a Black man who got out of jail 15 years ago, and has been walking the straight and narrow ever since. He never wants to go back. He's built a life for himself. He's making it work. And then he finds out his son Isaiah and Isaiah his husband, Derek have both been murdered. Even though he had a hard time accepting his son, he is devastated by the loss. Enter Buddy Lee, Derek's father. He's also an ex convict. But he has little to live for. He's poor. He lives in a trailer. No one loves him. And he enlists Ike to help him seek revenge. These two men have nothing in common except the love that their son share and the way that they lost them. They both have a shady past. They both have a lot to learn. And that learning happens on the front seat of a truck. It happens sitting at a table with someone who isn't the same as you. It happens through conversations and arguments and upsets with each other. It happens like it does in real life. And goodness. I loved it. You guys. I loved it. But this book is violent and gory. And I am not a squeamish person, but we are talking about brain matter and intestines, not just blood and death. I will never look at my gardening tools the same way again. So please know that going in. It's yucky. That's the only thing that keeps me from saying that everyone should read this book because I love bringing books like that where everyone should read this book. But it's not for every reader. That being said, it's propulsive and exciting. It's difficult and harrowing. And if you take the violence and revenge of Kill Bill and you mix it with the justice and redemption of Just Mercy, you've got Razorblade Tears as a pairing, I will tell you to check out The Book Review Podcast episode from July 16. That's put out by the new the New York Times which is an interview with S.A. Cosby. That interview cemented my love for him in my heart. I love him now. And of course you could pair this with other rural noir Bluebird Bluebird by Attica Locke is a great pairing for this one. And luckily we have lots of friends who have said his first novel they have now picked it up and they loved Blacktop Wasteland as well. So it's on my TBR it's coming up on the list. This one though, is Razorblade Tears by S.A. Cosby.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:33

Kaytee I'm so glad that you brought this to the show and you describe it so perfectly. Really. I'm just really really well. I haven't read it yet. This is one of those ones that I have wanted to read but I have felt

like I couldn't read it because it has been everywhere and on every podcast but to a person everyone has said that it's been one that they have absolutely loved that it is so good. So I am going to let myself read this book at some point and You know, kudos to him also for two books with great titles. Yeah, I am so tired of books with forgettable titles. And these two books have really, really good titles.

Kaytee Cobb 35:11

They really do. It's I mean, good for him just just all around good for him. I'm so excited that he's blowing up the geit.... The zeitgeist right now too I mean, it's, Oh, it's so exciting. I love it when this happens. So and it's it's that good. Like, it deserves it. You know how sometimes you're like, Oh, look at this book, just you know, it's everywhere. And you're like, Yeah, but, you know, this is incredible. Yeah, that's a good one. All right. So those were our six current reads. And now we get to talk about auto-buy authors. And both of us already said, Jessica Townsend is on this list. But who else came to mind with you? And why? Meredith? Why do you auto-buy these books?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 35:50

Right. So first, as I thought about this, I thought, Well, okay, let me define for me. And let's first let's just check in Kaytee and see if we define this in the same way. We're using the term auto-buy author but I actually mean it literally when I talk about this. So these are, these are authors who, when I hear that they have a book coming out, I literally am going to place a pre-order for that book, I do it through my local Indie fabled. And I'm not just waiting to see if I can get it from the library super quick. I'm not just waiting to see if some of my other sources that get me books I'm not, you know, I'm not even gonna assume I'm gonna get an arc. These are books that I'm going to put my cash dollars down for, because the author has been a hit for me. So that was, you know, so going in like, that sounds like that's what you think too right Kaytee, that's how you define it.

Kaytee Cobb 36:43

Yes, I yes. And I am so careful about how many books I bring into my home that I will try some of those other options first, but like I just talked about with Razorblade Tears. Once I read it, and I love it, I usually end up buying a copy anyway. So it's more like a delayed purchase that I know I'm going to be making.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:06

If that makes sense. Right? When when as I thought more about this, there's a few categories of auto-buy authors for me and in a couple of those cases as I mentioned in my bite size intro I'm loyal to sometimes I'm loyal to a fault. I think that your method actually might be a really, really smart one. So right out the gate of course we think about some I think about some series that are auto-buy right so that's an auto-buy author and also your it's because it's the next in a series right? So clearly the Nevermoor books are auto-buy for both of us. Obviously, Louise Penny's Three Pines inspector Gamache series is the ultimate auto-buy for me. Literally, within minutes of her books being available on Amazon or Fabled, I will immediately place a pre-order. I'm saying Amazon because historically back in the day, that's where I would place my pre-order. But so when Louise Penny has a new book coming out, which she does on August 24 this year we that's that's the ultimate auto-buy some other series that fall into that same category for me are the well the Winterhouse series which now is completed. Ben Guterson has completed that series. It's three books. That's auto-buy. The Curse so

Dark and Lonely series is one that I will automatically put a pre-order in. Ellery Adams has her Secret Book and Scone Society. That's one that I will put a pre-order in on and then up till now the Hunger Games,

Kaytee Cobb 38:34

Right? I thought about that one too.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:36

It was right like the ultimate auto-buy right? The second we heard that Suzanne Collins was coming out with a new a prequel to The Hunger Games series, we both we put it out pre-order got it read it, the The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes and absolutely hated it so that one falls into the category of I'm not gonna automat... if I'm like you can hood me hoodwink me once with her. I'm not going to fall into that trap again, but those are those are some series that fall into that category for me.

Kaytee Cobb 39:05

Right and I have I mean, does this happen to you even after the very first book of a series like I just this past week pre-ordered Cazadora which is the second in the Lobizona series Yeah, and I am I'm you know, I've only read one book by Romina Garber, but, man, I'm so excited to get the next one of those. So she she has only shown me once but she's autobuy right now for me. But otherwise I have a lot of kind of one offs like Angie Thomas, who wrote The Hate U Give as soon as she released On the Come Up, I got that one. As soon as I saw a Concrete Rose at the bookstore, oh man, I snatched it up so fast, and I was so excited that it was signed by her because I know they're going to be hits for me. And those aren't series but they're all placed in the same world. So it kind of works. Nic Stone is another author like that. She's my ultimate author crush, like, like Jason. She's on the list. I adore her. I've read four of her books and they are consistently four and five star reads for me like she just she just keeps putting out stuff that I love total gold. Liane Moriarty. Meredith is she an auto-buy for you? Has she ever slipped?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 40:14

So there's only one book of hers that I actually have not read which is Truly Madly Deadly and I so I haven't read it. But so many people told me it was bad that I just didn't want to spoil her but I even liked Nine Perfect...lives? Nine Perfect Strangers. Yeah, so she is for sure an auto buy author and she has a new one coming out in the not too distant future,

Kaytee Cobb 40:38

which I'm very excited about again. John Marrs is one of those for me, especially he has, you know, a couple different things going on. But one is his like near future sci fi thriller stuff. The One, The Passengers, The Minders, I loved all three of the things set in that world and the way that easter eggs like play together, so total autobuy or as soon as I hear about it, I request an arc. And then when it's released, I go ahead and buy a copy. And then I have to brag a little bit Colson Whitehead. I had one that I did not love from him, and that's backlist. But everything he's put out since The Underground Railroad, I just lap up. So very excited about Harlem Shuffle, which also again comes out in September. So that's coming right up. So excited to read that one. And that's total autobuy for me.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 41:25

Yeah. Well, so new to me, which is not going to surprise anybody is my absolute love and devotion physically and mentally to Amor Towles. And so he's become the ultimate auto-buy, backlist and auto-buy for what's coming out. So he's got I'm buying his backlist and reading through it. And then also he's got a book coming out The Lincoln Highway so that automatically pre-ordered. Some other non-eries auto-buys for me are of course Anthony Horowitz, that he has another book coming out. And so that is when this you know, almost never ever fails me on and he's written multiple kind of series, or books set in the same kind of world like three different worlds. All of those books have been hits for me. So Anthony Horowitz is a major hit Simone St. James who wrote The Sundown Motel and Broken Girls and the Haunting of Maddy Clare autobuy author for me now, and another one, Tim Johnston. I will go anywhere Tim Johnson wants to take me he wrote The Dissent and Current... he wrote Dissent and The Current and both are absolutely fantastic. And I will immediately buy anything that he puts out and Rumaan Alam, not a super deep...

Kaytee Cobb 42:46

Interesting.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 42:47

You know, I haven't I've read two of his, which were very different one from the other. But you can bet your last bit I will buy I will place an order. The second we find out he has another book coming out. And then Maggie O'Farrell also falls into that category. Very different books, very different back catalogue. But nine times out of 10 really, really a big hit for me. So Maggie O'Farrell is on that list. Nice.

Kaytee Cobb 43:13

Okay, I have a few more to add to David Sedaris everything except to the diaries. Okay, Auto-buy for me.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:21

Absolutely. He's on my non fiction auto-buy list.

Kaytee Cobb 43:23

Okay. Although the next diaries one is called A Carnival of Snackery. And it has an elephant on the cover. And even that, I'm like, Well, I don't know, maybe I need it. I'm a completist I kind of want it on my shelf. So I'm a little worried about myself.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:37

Again, great titles, great covers,

Kaytee Cobb 43:39

I know Carnival of Snackery, you guys. Ibram X. Kendi is one of the only like, learning ones that I'm going to put on this list. Because I mean, he just continues to blow me away. I continue to learn from him. He You know, when he collaborates with other people, they're always incredible, like Jason

Reynolds, or when he put together Four Hundred Souls with all these 90 authors. Like nobody could do that except Ibram, who

Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:02

He's doing interesting things.

Kaytee Cobb 44:04

He really is. And then I want to throw a romance one in here. But Chloe, Liese, who writes steamy, accessible, inclusive romance with heroes and heroines that are on the spectrum dealing with either like an on the autism spectrum or other mental health struggles. Great tension, really great steam, and when I see that she's got a new one coming. I'm like, click bring it I want it right now. Thanks so much.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:31

Yeah, absolutely. Well, I'm glad that you put a romance went on the list there. I Gretchen Rubin is another nonfiction, Laura Vanderkam the those two kind of in the productivity, kind of self care element of things I love I love Gary Vaynerchuk. He's, uh, he writes business books that I really love. Those are autobuy for me for sure. Erik Larson, I will almost always either buy or very much race to the library for whatever his latest one is because he's not 100% for me, but a lot of the time, I certainly want to know, I want to know what his latest one is about for sure. I had one more category of author Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 45:13

That is auto throwaway?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 45:15

Autobot. No, no, auto-buy, for better or for worse. I have this small handful of authors that I will buy even now today, if you told me that these authors had a new book come out, I will buy it. But they are hit and miss at best for me and the and so those are there's it's a foursome. It's Riley Sager, runs about 50/50 for me, right, right. There's some big hits and some gigantic misses. Ruth Ware is right up there. About 50/50. God help Lucy Foley I will continue to buy even though I detested The Guest List. Right? And then another perfect 50/50 is Jane Harper.

Kaytee Cobb 46:05

Oh, interesting. Yeah, you've read only two of hers?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:11

No, I've read...

Kaytee Cobb 46:12

All four now? How can it be

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:16

The Lost Man? Well, I mean, okay, it's some percentage percentage.

Kaytee Cobb 46:21

That's not 100.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:21

Not a hundred.

Kaytee Cobb 46:23

We can math.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:24

Right. Exactly, exactly. But one of those ones where I'm, I'm sucked in by her premises. And because of the fact that I loved The Dry as much as I did. But real Okay, actually, I'm terrible at math because The Dry was the only one at first that I really, really liked and I haven't liked....

Kaytee Cobb 46:42

So one third.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:43

...any of the other ones.

Kaytee Cobb 46:44

Yeah. Did you read all of the other ones? Are you one third or one quarter?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:49

No, I read Force of Nature.

Kaytee Cobb 46:51

Okay.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:52

Which is terrible.

Kaytee Cobb 46:53

Yeah. 1/3 you liked 1/3 right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:57

I do. But I go I will continue to buy her books.

Kaytee Cobb 47:01

Nice. Okay, scanning my list I have. I have one more 100% author has consistently surprised me every time: Steven Rowley. I love him so much. And his three books are so different. Lily and the Octopus, The Editor and The Guncle I just want all three of them to like make babies on my shelves and have a whole bunch more books that are just quirky and witty and hilarious. And he's he's definitely now on auto-buy author for me, I adore him. I love him. That's all I'm gonna say about him.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:31

Well, I have three authors who fall into the category of I've only read one book of theirs but it automatic autobuy and that is Michael Christie who wrote Greenwood. Okay, I have no idea if there's another book coming out. I don't know any I just know that I will if another one coming up. Okay, yes, guess another one.

Kaytee Cobb 47:51

Scott Hawkins.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:53

Well, Lord help us if he would write another book he wrote The Library at Mount Char.

Kaytee Cobb 47:58

Yeah, I know what that's what made me think of it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:00

Yeah, for sure.

Kaytee Cobb 48:02

But if it does, you're gonna buy it. Right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:04

Well, right, Terry Hayes. I Am Pilgrim like, another like, everybody loved that book. And why is there not another book coming? So those kind of Yeah, for sure. On both those on both for both of those. Chuck Wendig I loved Wanderers. I'm reading The Book of Accidents right now. It's fantastic. Creepy AF like, very scary.

Kaytee Cobb 48:26

Is it also giant? Is it 800 pages?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:28

Yeah, it's no... it's not 800 pages. No, it's six. Okay. 600. So not it's not you know, it's not little, but it's not as big. And then of course, you guys have heard me already talk a little bit about The Nothing Man by Catherine Ryan Howard. And she is an auto-buy the second that this woman has an I have already purchased and it's they're heading to me two of her back catalogue. And the second she comes out with another book, you can bet I'm going to be buying it. So that's one book puts them into auto-buy.

Kaytee Cobb 49:00

I think that was a lot longer deep dive than we expected because there are a lot of dollars flying out of our pockets is basically what we've determined at this point in time.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:10

We spend way more money on books than we should

Kaytee Cobb 49:14

Than we're comfortable with, than we tell our husbands... Yes, no, wait, that's fine. But let's press some books. What should other people auto buy Meredith? What are you going to press into our hands today?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:24

Well, one of the books that falls into this category of as soon as I read it, that author became an auto-buy author for me and Kaytee, I think you feel kind of the same way about this author is I read *The Mother-In-Law* by Sally Hepworth. And you guys know I've talked about *The Mother-In-Law* multiple times because it's just it's absolutely fantastic. So I want to be sure that it's on our press list. But I also want to say everybody needs to follow Sally Hepworth on Instagram. She is a delight. She is so funny and real and gorgeous. But you still like her. She's just everything on Instagram. It's rude. It's very rude for her to be as cute as she is. And then also super smart and authentic. But yeah, so follow her on Instagram. She's awesome. So *The Mother-In-Law*, so you'll remember this. So our lead character Lucy from the very second that she meets her mother in law, Diane, Diana. She knows that they are not going to be close. But Lucy really, really really wants her mother-in-law to like her. She really wants to be close to her mother-in-law. But Diana is one of these people that just holds kind of everybody at an arm's length. She's super Diana is very polite, very, very, you know, nice and polite all the time. But Lucy just no matter what she does, she can't seem to win her over. Now as our book starts, Diana is dead. And a suicide note found near her body claims that Diana no longer wanted to live because there was cancer inside her body that was going to wreak havoc, but the autopsy finds no cancer at all. It does however find traces of poison and evidence of suffocation. So the question is, who wanted Diana dead? You guys this book is what back when it came out, which two or three, three years ago, I think it was getting the comparison to *Big Little Lies* which of course is one of those things right that they want to compare books to because everybody wants to be compared to *Gone Girl* or *Big Little Lies*. This one actually worked because it is smart, it has depth. But it's got a ton of plot that makes you want to turn the pages. It is that perfect sweet spot for me that makes me just remember why reading books is my chief, one of my chief joys in life. And so this one is a perfect example of that. It's the short chapters that just make you want to every chapter kind of ends on a cliffhanger that makes you just be like okay, just one more chapter. Just one more chapter. And I do have to say I think about this book all the time because it is the most perfect portrayal of an UNhealthy enneagram type one that you will ever read, except if you read *The Home-Maker*, which is one of my favorite books of all time, because I collect books that are about unhealthy type ones, because I tend toward being an unhealthy type one. So this one...

Kaytee Cobb 52:35

Cautionary tales.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:37

Very cautionary tale for me. I have to read it and go like are you okay? Are you veering to that place where someone's gonna want to murder you? This happens. So this is *The Mother-In-Law* by Sally Hepworth. And I absolutely think if you love mysteries and thrillers and haven't read it, this I'm jealous that you get to read this book for the first time. It's awesome.

Kaytee Cobb 52:58

Agree, agree on that entire thing, especially being jealous about somebody who gets to pick up The Mother-In-Law for the first time because that's Oh, it's such a great experience. Love it. Okay, the book I'm going to press this week also comes from I went through that list of auto-buy authors and realize that even though I love some of these writers so much that I can't sleep on their new releases, there are a few that are not on the press list yet. So one of those I get to remedy today and it's Nic Stone, her duology Dear Martin and Dear Justyce is a pair that must be read in order so technically I'm pressing Dear Martin, but know that you have to go from there to Dear Justyce. So double press. Haha. I'm so sneaky. Here's the setup. Justyce McAllister is brilliant. He's the top of his class he set for the Ivy League. But none of that matters to the police officer who just put them in handcuffs. And despite leaving his rough neighborhood behind, he can't escape the scorn of his former peers who think he's moved up in the world or the ridicule of his new classmates who thinks he's not good enough for them. Justyce looks to the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. for answers but do they hold up anymore? He starts a journal to Dr. King to find out which is where the Dear Martin of the title comes from. When Justyce comes driving with his best friend Manny windows rolled down music turned way up. It sparks the fury of a white off duty cop beside them. Words fly, shots are fired. Justyce and Manny are caught in the crosshairs. This book is not long. It's 200 ish pages. You can read it in the afternoon. Maybe because it's chock full of amazing characters, harrowing situations, and incredible insights into U.S. race relations. If you've read Ghost Boys, which is one of Meredith's presses from Season Three, especially to your kids, and they are ready to progress from there into the YA books, this is the one I would put in their hands. I would put it in any high school classroom. It pairs wonderfully with The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas, which I pressed a long time ago. If I could ask Nic Stone for a sequel to these two and make it into a lovely trilogy, I'd call it Dear Malcolm, and set it the same way but with letters to Malcolm X as the as the center point to it. And if anyone can do it, she can. This book is incredible. And as soon as Dear Justyce came out, I Autobot... Auto-bought it, which sounds weird. Yeah, not Autobot like Transformers but different. And the way they look together on my shelves just makes my heart happy. This one is Dear Martin by Nic Stone.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 55:29

Oh, that's a great press. I love that it does pair with Ghost Boys. That's the perfect transition or progression. Yeah, that's, that's excellent. Good press, Kaytee. Alright, that is it for this week. As reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me I'm Meredith at @Meredith.reads on Instagram.

Kaytee Cobb 55:47

And you can find me Kaytee at @notesonbookmarks on Instagram.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 55:51

Full show 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 at our website at currentlyreadingpodcast.com

Kaytee Cobb 56:02

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 56:07

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Kaytee Cobb 56:39

Bookish friends are the best friends. All of those things are helping us grow and get closer to our goals. Thanks for doing that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 56:45

Alright, until next week. Happy reading Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 56:48

Happy reading Meredith.