



Season 4, Episode 33: The Quickie Book + Reading Seasons

Mon, 3/28 • 53:58

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 read recently. And as you know, we won't shy away from having those strong and controversial opinions. So get ready.

Mindy Brouse 00:25

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:36

I'm Meredith Monday Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas, and I am so happy when I'm reading a 1000 page book.

Mindy Brouse 00:45

And I'm Mindy Brouse, a midlife mom to seven homeschooling and reading in the mountains of New Mexico, and I am especially grateful for friends that recommend books to me when I need a warm, fuzzy book. This is episode number 33 of season four. And we are so glad you're here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:01

All right, Mindy, are you ready? We've been looking forward to this. We haven't recorded together since November, I think?

Mindy Brouse 01:07

I think so. I'm excited. I miss hanging out with you.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:11

I absolutely love it. I love it so much. Okay, right over the front, we're gonna let you guys know that our deep dive today is that Mindy and I are going to talk about the reading seasons of our lives. We all go through them. And I just think it's an interesting conversation. We'll talk about how they can be different, how they can kind of be jarring, and the best ways to lean into them. But before we do that, let's start the way we always do with our bookish moment of the week. Mindy, what have you got?

Mindy Brouse 01:38

All right, well, hands down my bookish moment of the week this week has been watching Paul Lewis devour *The Goblet of Fire*. Oh my gosh. So the Brouse house rules for Harry Potter books is that our kids have to be the same age as Harry to read the book, okay, which means they have to wait a year in between each book. We have caught grief for making them wait. And sometimes I doubt myself during the year because I just am so excited about the next book. Until that birthday week rolls around, Meredith and then all the excitement the whole family has for Paul Lewis getting handed the next book makes my heart so full. I feel like we get to capture some of the original feelings from when the Harry Potter books were first released. And we all get the best bookish feelings watching Paul Lewis get up early to read every time he can. He you know all his exclamations about moments or lines or things that are happening in the book. It's probably one of my favorite weeks of the year, because he's the last one we let them read book six and seven. At the same time. So Esther has read them all now.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 02:46

Okay, okay. No, I have a few questions. Can I ask you questions? Okay. Sure. So, in the run up to the birthday, where they get to have the next one, are they able to reread any of the prior ones?

Mindy Brouse 03:00

Sure, yeah. And they can do whatever they want with that once they've read a book, they can read it as often as they want. Paul Lewis has listened to the first three, probably five times this year, because he listens to the books every night when he does dishes, because he's the dishes guy at our house and he just plays them on loop. Yeah. What is your bookish moment? I've been curious to see what it's gonna be.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:23

Okay. So I have gone back and forth and back and forth as to whether or not I want to bring my true bookish moment. And I'm going to because I'm all I always try to be as authentic as possible. So the one that I the one that is true that I was going to talk about, was the fact that I started a new slow but steady book, a big chunky, which I really like to do. You know, a lot of us like to do that. And I'm gonna read *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* by Susanna Clarke who wrote *Piranesi* loving it, blah, blah, blah, Follow me on Instagram if you want to kind of keep up with my with my progress there. But really, truly what has been on my mind a lot in the last couple of days, I think is a little bit controversial, but I kind of just want to talk it through to see if I'm being a bad reader by doing this new thing, but I'm kind of doing it a lot now. Okay. All right. So you guys know that I love to do a book flight, right? One of my favorite things, I go to the library every week, I come home, I get five to seven books and read the first chapter of each one of them and then decide which if any of them really call to me, and that will usually be my next read. So that's how I do my book flights. Well, often one of at least one of those books is what I would count as kind of a buzzy hype-y thriller of the moment, right? Some, some thriller-ish mystery thriller that has been out that a lot of people are talking about at the time, right. So, to a specific example, this weekend that really solidified that I'm doing this thing a lot, and I wanted to talk about it because I just don't, I might be being a bad reader, I will often pick that up, I put it on my list because I, I'm always looking for that thriller that I'm just going to be like, Oh, yes, I can sink into it and it's going to be a good quality book. But really quickly, I think you can tell if a book is either not going to be for you

not going to be for you right now. Not going to be whatever, whatever. So what I've been doing is, oftentimes, I don't want to not know what happens, because the thing about these books is that they're so premise driven, right. And they have these great premises. And so what I've been doing is kind of the equivalent of listening to an audio book on like three times speed, I kind of do the reading equivalent for me of that. Okay. And what that means for me is really just going through the book very, very quickly. Now, let me say at the outset of this, when I do this with a book, I do not put it in my book journal. And I do not bring it to the show, because I only do those two things with books that I read from start to finish completely and in a normal way. So this is not that, okay. But this is me saying, I want to get what I want to get from this book. But I don't want to spend a ton of time with it. Because I know it's not something I want to spend a ton time with. So I just read a book called I just quote unquote, "read" a book called The Violence. And right off the top my head, I can't remember who the author was, again, I wasn't gonna put it in my book journal. It's a big like, 450 page book. And it has an interesting premise having to do with, like, an epidemic start sweeping the nation, we're getting so many of these books these days, where the people who are infected with this thing, they all of a sudden become incredibly violent, like really, really, really violent. This book is not for HSPs. And, and so then our lead characters are three generations of a family, three women in a family who are all being abused by the men that they're with. And there's all these things about how they then use the violence to get out of the situation that they're in. It's a problematic book. I'm, again, I'm not recommending it, I'm not recommending it. And I knew that I didn't want to invest time in it. But I did want to, I did want to find out what was gonna happen. And I did want to kind of get a sense of it.

Mindy Brouse 04:32

So you just read it super fast.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:37

But here's what I'm doing. I read, I usually read like the first 25 to 30 pages at normal speed to really get grounded the story and the characters. And then I sort of just go from big event to big event slowing down and speeding up through the book basically takes me about an hour with a book to consume this again, this is a big chunky was like 450 pages. And so at the end of it, I know exactly what happened in that book. I could definitely convince somebody that I read it, but I wouldn't again, I would not bring it to the show, wouldn't put into my book journal. But I feel like I got out of that book. All that I needed to get out of it. Like I felt satisfied by this time with the book.

Mindy Brouse 08:26

I can't believe I'm gonna say this. I really just can't. But Meredith, this is a quickie book is what you're saying?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 08:32

I think. Yeah. I mean, boy, there's just been so many of these innuendo related things coming from me lately,

Mindy Brouse 08:38

but again, I can't believe I'm saying this, but as you described it, I was like, Yeah, Meredith's describing a quickie book and got what she wanted out of it, right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 08:50

I've been looking for a name. I've been looking for a name for this thing that I'm doing. Because I feel very empowered by this, which is why I wanted to talk about it. Because I feel like I'm saying, this is a book that I don't want to have to decide I'm either going to devote a few days of my reading time to it or not touch it at all. Yeah, like, you know what I mean?

Mindy Brouse 09:13

And so I think it's very smart. You're like, I'm just gonna breeze through this, because I want to know, but I don't want to live there. I just want to visit kind of a thing, right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:22

I just want to get a sense of it. And if you know, and this has actually happened a couple of times when I've done these quickie reads, where all of a sudden I realized, oh, wait, hang on. I think I actually do want to read this book and talk about it. And one of those books is a part of my current reads today.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:37

Exactly. Right. And then I read it at normal pace, finished the entire thing and now I will bring it to the show. So anyway, I hope that that doesn't make me a bad reader. Or again, I'm sorry, I'm such a one. So like, I never want to break rules, but I feel like it's breaking readerly rules. But at the same time, I want my reading to be a place where I can make the rules that I want to follow and not follow.

Mindy Brouse 09:37

Oh, perfect. So it led... convinced you basically. You enjoyed the experience so much. That you're like, "You know what, I'm here. Let's do this for real now."

Mindy Brouse 10:07

I agree. You know, who knows that later down the road, you might be like, gosh, I do remember that a little bit. And I think I'm going to try it again. Now for real, you never know. You never know.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:16

Absolutely. So now, let's start talking about those current reads. Mindy, what's your first one this week?

Mindy Brouse 10:22

All right. My first read is a YA book that soared to the top of my list already for this year. It's quirky, it's funny. This is Rayne and Delilah's Midnight Matinee by Jeff Zentner. It looks like I'm becoming a Zentner completist. I don't know what to do with that. The Serpent King and In the Wild Light both landed on my top 21 of '21. So I sort of expected this one to be less aweing. I was like, "There's no way I can love three." I was wrong. There we go. So this YA book by Jeff Zentner isn't like his others, except that it also focuses on late teen friendships. When I got to talk to Jeff about YA books and the benefit

they bring to teens, especially reluctant readers, he shared how he wanted to write a comedy that brought a different taste in this book. And that's what he's done. We have two young women who have hosted a hilarious odd irreverent, horror movie mocking show weekly on TV. They built this small show themselves as teenagers to a good sized one while in high school, and then also grew their friendship. They only met because they both wanted to do this show, and had the same weird sense of humor. The girls share love for old weird horror movies. They have great humor. They like being the odd ones out in school. But their after high school plans are completely different and shows the different life they live outside of the show they do together. As they near graduation, situations, parents and bump, bump bump a boy bring challenges to the scene of their friendship and the show. I really love this book so much. How is this YA different than other YAs? One, it's not like Jeff Zentner's other other books at all. It has a unique brand of humor, has quirky topics. This book has strong female entrepreneurs. It has friendships, interacting from a business partner standpoint and then growing. It has parental engagement that's different, but none of them are abusive in this novel, and it has a different peek into a team life. I laughed a lot. I felt for these girls. It's a great way book. Zentner really knows how to capture teens without mocking them. And his respect for these young people shines through and I appreciate that. Esther is reading this for school right now. When I can find a YA book that makes me giggle, but also makes me think to previous previous previous Mindy by a whole lot. I found a book I want to talk about so I loved it. It was really fun. I bought it. That's Rayne and Delilah's Midnight Matinee by Jeff Zentner.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 13:03

I am so glad that you bring these kinds of books because it's important that people who like teenagers bring books to the show.

Mindy Brouse 13:12

Exactly. What is your first current read?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 13:15

Okay, the first one that I want to bring is not the one that I was talking about in my bookish moment of the week. So this is a different one. You gotta wait just a little bit. Okay, I want to talk about a book that I read that surprised me how much I loved it. It's called *The House We Grew Up In* by Lisa Jewell. So here's the setup, and then I'll tell you a little bit about how I found it. This is the story of the Bird family. The mom, Lorelei Bird, around who the whole story orbits, raised her four children with her husband in a happy picturesque home in the Cotswolds in England. At the start of the book, we get these lovely scenes, and then we get a rude awakening right at the very beginning of the book, because we are forced to ask the question, "How is it after all those lovely scenes of the household and bucolic life did Lorelei the mom end up ending her life starving, alone, and surrounded by enough clutter to kill her?" So in this book, we also get to know their kids. We've got pragmatic Meg, dreamy Beth and twins, Rory and Rhys, one of whom is an adventurous troublemaker, and the other his slighter, more sensitive counterpart. Their father is a sweet, quiet man who seems to realize that it's his wife who is the center of all their lives. And in those early years, Lorelei does everything she can to create a perfect life for her family, who she loves desperately. And then one Easter weekend, a tragedy so devastating occurs, that it begins to tear the family apart. We follow the events in real time and then years ahead as the children

grow up and try to navigate the legacy that the tragedy has left behind for all of them. Okay, so a couple things that are interesting about this book. First of all, Lisa Jewell is a favorite author of mine. I've actually read several of her books, you might remember the titles, *Then She Was Gone*, *The Family Upstairs*, *The Night She Disappeared*. These are the kinds of crimes I'm going to call crime fiction that she writes and that she's more known for recently. So it was bookish serendipity that this one actually ended up in my hands because I had never heard of this part of her catalogue at all. I was in my new one of my new favorite independent bookstores Novel in Memphis, which I'm lucky enough to be close to when I visit Devon, and I was hand sold a book, this book because they do such a good job not only in having all of their staff available to answer questions and to actually hand sell, but they've given each one of their, several of their staff members their own bookshelves on like an end cap. So a large book, maybe 75, 100 titles that that staffer has been able to pull and say, these are the books that I love. Well, the benefit of that is you can move from shelf to shelf, and you can see who kind of loves what I've loved. And then what else have they loved. That's how I found this. Ah, it's so smart. I absolutely love the way they organized

Mindy Brouse 16:27

This like a book twin you. You've just found like a book twin kind of a thing.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 16:31

Exactly. It's really, really, really smart. So this book is interesting, because as I said, Lisa Jewell normally writes crime fiction. But this one is a complete outlier in that it is definitely not what I would describe as a mystery or a thriller. This is really more of a family drama, more than anything. I guess you could probably call it. No, it's not domestic suspense. It's just the story of a family. That's all it is. It's not suspense, mystery thriller, anything. It's a dysfunctional family saga. That's probably the way to say it. I'm glad I finally came around while we're recording to the right way to describe it. Good Lord. All right. So yes, it's a story of a family. It's the story of the mental illness that is hoarding, and how that reverberates throughout the entire family. I was completely from the start entranced by these characters. And I read the entire first half of this rather sizable book in one go in Memphis late at night. And I was super tired that day. So it says a lot that I read that much. I was a little bit confused as I started, because I kind of thought I was going to get more of the Lisa Jewell that I knew that I know of. But once I let go of thinking that this is going to be a mystery or thriller, I just was able to relax in the fact that this family was very absorbing. And I was rooting for them to get through some horrible things that they were going through, and hopefully find a way to be whole in the end. This is incredibly well written. And I'm really, really glad that I read it. I felt like it gave me a new and deeper understanding and compassion for people who struggle with hoarding. And I think for me, that was a real gift. This is also a story about secrets, and how secrets kept shut tight over the course of years turned into much bigger, more toxic things. This has me thinking about my role as a mother and a grandmother and really doubling down on my efforts to be as transparent and authentic as possible with my family. Secrets can be nasty little things and this book really, really underscores that. I will say that there are trigger warnings for several things including definitely suicide, mental illness, and there's also an adultery slumped subplot, which usually is a big trigger for me, but in the context of this story didn't bother me as much as it would have in another story. So this book was page turning and it was very sad in some

ways, but I do want to say that there's a lot of hope and redemption in the end, so it doesn't leave you stranded in that kind of maudlin place. This is *The House We Grew Up In* by Lisa Jewell.

Mindy Brouse 19:21

All right, my next current read comes out April 5, but y'all are gonna want to grab it. This is *True Biz* by Sarah Novic. Bookish friend Cindy Ann shared about this book with me and I immediately started looking for it. Once I realized it wasn't released yet I reached out for an arc. I couldn't be more glad that I received one because this is a one of a kind book about a topic I wish more people knew about and understood: Deaf Culture. Yes, this book is written by a Deaf author and she does not hold any punches back in this novel. Okay, we have students and staff at River Valley School for the Deaf. Charlie, a transfer student who has never met another deaf student before. Austin, the golden boy of the school who comes from a long line of deaf people. And February the headmistress of this school who is a CODA, which is a child of a deaf adult. Their lives are shared with us in all the different ways that each other interact, but also in their life separately, and we get to see their family life, their relationships, their history. But then they become invested in each other in ways they don't expect. This book moves quickly. It is a coming of age story. But it's really so much more than that. I'm really emotional talking about this aspect of this book that I also love, besides the amazing story is that in between chapters there are quote, lessons on Deaf culture or on ESL, helping the reader not only take the heart of this story, and what it offers, but take it deeper and then also put it into action. Even the title *True Biz* is an ESL adjective or exclamation. You're going to be shook after reading this novel. For real, especially, especially if you're unaware of all the controversies that Sara the author brings to the table. The cultural distinctions, the emotional trials involved in making decisions as a parent of a deaf child, as well as making them as a Deaf teen, the importance of schools for the deaf, I could go on. I will say I can't really explain how emotional I got reading this book Meredith. My life isn't involved in the Deaf community anymore. But for many years, it was in ways that profoundly affected me, not only as a teacher for the deaf, but that time set me up to successfully foster parent a deaf teen. My time in Arkansas School for the Deaf and a brief stint at Texas School for the Deaf taught me more than my classes to become a teacher ever could. I teared up with nostalgia, anger, gratitude from all that is in this book, from lessons on getting signed names by only deaf people, which reminded me of when my dear friend Stacy, who's at Gallaudet University, Laurent Claire National Deaf Education Center, sending us a video giving Jubilee, her name sign on adoption day, to lessons on what it's like for deaf children to go home on weekends and have nobody to communicate with them. The only issue I have with this book is that I don't feel like one of the situations the students engaged in near the end of the book was treated with the seriousness it should have. I tend to land there more often Meredith. You and I both are like, hey teenager, not only was that really dumb, but that was much bigger deal than we're all acting like it was and that bothered me. The strength of this book is seems to capture the author's personality based on my Google work. Celeste Ng described the book this way "Part tender coming of age story, part electrifying tale of political awakening. Part heartfelt love letter to Deaf Culture. *True Biz* is wholly a wonder." Sara Novic examines the ways language can include, exclude or help forge an identity as well as what it means to carve out a place for yourself in a world that sees you as other. Y'all read this book. You won't regret it and you'll walk away with a deeper understanding of a culture that is often overlooked, misunderstood and treated poorly. I couldn't be more glad that I got to read this book. *True Biz* by Sara Novic. All right, what is your second read?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 23:20

All right, my second read is a little bit different. But I also this year have been reading quite a bit more nonfiction. So it's a nonfiction book. And it's a book that lots of people, it's so strange how many people have been reading this book in the past year because Anne Bogel has championed it. And I picked it up on her recommendation. I read Laundry Love by Patrick Richardson. Yeah. So the subtitle of this book tells us everything that we need to know about what it's about. It's Laundry Love: Finding Joy in a Common Chore. And that's exactly what this book does. I think going into it, I thought it was going to be a little more of an instruction manual, maybe even a little bit sciency. But it wasn't. It's part memoir and part helpful tool for a chore that every one of us has to do on the regular right? I felt this book was such a treasure. I got it from the library and then immediately ended up buying it because I had to have it on my shelf to refer back to. There's so much great information here. So again, you've probably heard of laundry love through Anne Bogel. Bless her. She's been shouting from the rooftops. I'm so glad that she did because this book is a gym. It's both eminently enjoyable to actually read. I was laughing all the way through it. And it's incredibly useful. I immediately changed several of my laundry routines, and I've been doing it for a couple of months now and it's definitely been a positive. So since you're wondering, I'm going to tell you my two biggest takeaways from laundry love were wash everything in warm water not hot or cold, you'll be surprised to find out why that's important. And stop using fabric softener. It's not helping what you think it is, and it's damaging your clothes, your towels, your skin and your dryer. I think I knew that I would learn something when I read this book, but I wasn't prepared to giggle as much as I did when I read this book. There are a few reasons why. First of all, I love it when people turn their weird little passions as children into a career later. It just makes me so happy. That like weird child who was totally fascinated by laundry, has completely made this his career and I love this for Patrick.

Mindy Brouse 25:46

Oh my gosh, he started this as a kid?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 25:48

He was fascinated. Yes. And I just I love that. And the thing is too that Patrick is a peach. He has such a good heart and he sees the world in a positive, charming way, which I don't normally do and I found myself wanting to have dinner and a load of laundry with him. I just adored him. He shares stories of his family that just warmed my cold dead heart. How good it is, after reading so many books about broken people and dysfunctional family, I did read this right on the heels of The House We Grew Up In, to hear stories of close connections across multiple generations amongst healthy people, like emotionally healthy people. I will say as I said that I got this book from the library just to see what it was all about. And it's a book for sure that you're going to want to own so that you can pull it down the next time you have a laundry emergency. He covers almost everything and gives you so many ways to make your laundry chores take less time and be less expensive. So it's a reference book that will earn its cost back in no time.

Mindy Brouse 26:55

I cannot believe you just talked me into reading this. I cannot believe it. I was hell bent on not reading it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 27:01

And I have to say I wasn't really that into it either. Except you know what I kind of am into laundry. I really like doing laundry. The other thing is this book has the brightest happiest cheeriest cover. I just loved it. So this is Laundry Love by Patrick Richardson.

Mindy Brouse 27:17

My last current read is one I found while looking for something funny, written by an Indigenous author. I needed to laugh I needed something that would hold my attention. I've been struggling. This is just what I needed. We have here Motorcycles and Sweetgrass by Drew Hayden Taylor. I am grinning just thinking about this novel. The dry wit and the one liners that poke fun at all white people as well as Aboriginal people are hilarious. Not to mention the scenes were motorcycle man John has conversations and heated arguments and a food fight with large groups of raccoons. Absolutely, absolutely hilarious. I have just died. Here's the blurb from the author's site: "A story of magic family, a mysterious stranger and a band of marauding raccoons. Otter Lake is a sleepy Anishnawbe community where little happens until the day a handsome stranger pulls up astride a 1953 Indian chief motorcycle, and turns Otter Lake completely upside down. Maggie, the Reserve's chief is swept off her feet, but Virgil her teenage son is less than enchanted with this suspicious of the stranger's intentions. He teams up with his weird uncle Wayne, the master of Aboriginal martial arts to drive this stranger from the reserve. And it turns out that the raccoons are willing to lend a hand." Meredith, how can I not read that? How can I not?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 27:37

I just really like the sudden appearance of weird uncle Wayne.

Mindy Brouse 28:53

Yes, it is epic. This novel not only brings humor and sharing about the history and the reality of the Anishinaabe people, but also beautiful takes on how important family love, commitment and conversations are in our lives and in the Anishinaabe people. This is a light but engaging book with truth and hardship right under the surface. It's written in a way that makes you smile while also making you think and you're not likely to forget this. I love this novel and will definitely check out the other five fiction books he's written now. It was a slump breaker for me that I needed. And I'm so happy I read it. This is Motorcycles and Sweetgrass by Drew Hayden Taylor.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 29:36

Alright, let's wrap it up with my third current read, which is the book that I referenced back to the top of the show where this is a book that I was going to have it be a quickie, and then it ended up being more of a relationship. I read it all the way through. So again, just so no one thinks that I would bring a quickie to the show. This is not that. I was however, entranced by the premise but thought that I was going to be disappointed by it and I actually kind of liked it. This is The Husbands by Chandler Baker. Here's the setup. Our lead character is Nora Spangler. Nora is a successful attorney who is really struggling to balance her life as an attorney and her domestic life. She packs lunches, she schedules doctor's appointments, she knows where the extra paper towel rolls are and she designs and orders the holiday cards. Her husband who she loves works hard too but let's just say though, he's a very good

guy with loving intentions. He's not signing field trip permission slips and taking the kids to the dentist, right? Does this sound familiar to anybody? When the Spanglers go house hunting in Dynasty Ranch, an exclusive suburban neighborhood, Nora meets a group of high powered women, a tech CEO, a neurosurgeon, an award winning therapist, a best selling author, and they all have really enviably supportive husbands through a weird set of circumstances. Nora is pulled into the lives of these women in Dynasty Ranch and she quickly finds them to be different. These are successful career women like she is. But unlike her, these Dynasty Ranch women are not hanging on by a thread. In fact, they are thriving on a whole other level. The whole place feels a little too good to be true. And I don't have to tell you smart readers that that means something hinky is going on. All right, so many people DM'd me when this book came out. I mean, I think probably for obvious reasons. They were like you have to, you will be totally into this book, right? And now that I finished it, I actually quite understand what they liked about it and why they thought I would too. The Husbands gets marketed as a thriller and I think it actually would be correctly called domestic suspense. This definitely has suspense in it. In fact, the classic novel and movie *The Stepford Wives* is most definitely the inspiration for Chandler Baker's book here. But it turns that novel on its head in a really interesting way. It's a strong premise to start and the novel definitely starts out at a horses gallop, just gallops right along. At the 75% mark, I will say that I felt that the plot got a little less focused and a little more thriller ish, almost like maybe Chandler Baker wasn't quite sure how to land the plane that she'd so successfully been flying. It got a little bit turbulent. But I will say that this ended up being a 3.75 star read for me, which means that it wasn't the best book I've ever read by far, but I liked it quite a bit. I should also say that part of the reason that I liked it, and I really want to be clear about this is that so many of the issues that are being dealt with in this book are issues that are near and dear to my own heart, and in my own home. They're issues that I'm dealing with in my own marriage and ones that my friends are trying to manage too. If I weren't in that very specific place in my life, I can see someone getting bored by the "I'm so overwhelmed as a working mom" element of things because that piece gets pretty heavy handed, if I'm being honest. But the plotline was very interesting, if a tiny bit predictable, and the resolution was great for me. But please remember, I'm someone who doesn't need their endings to be completely tied up with a bow. Overall, this was a fantastic way to spend my time. It only took me a few hours to read. It's not very long, and it got me out of a book slump that I was struggling with. One final note, my 27 year old new mom daughter texted me just yesterday asking me for a book for her book club. Her book club is all women her age, all newly married, and they either have kids who were little babies, or they have kids on the way, so they don't want anything too heavy. For that this book is perfect because this group will have so much to discuss, but also a page turning format that will make it easy for them to finish the book before book club. This is *The Husbands* by Chandler Baker. Okay, so Mindy, let's talk about our deep dive today we want to talk about the concept of reading seasons. Okay, so we're not talking about reading the seasons, which is a different deep dive for like, "What do I want to read in the winter versus fall" and all of that. This is the concept that in our reading lives, we have seasons, we have periods of time where we might read a lot or we might read a little. We have periods of time where we want to do one kind of reading and definitely not another kind, and maybe completely vice versa. So Mindy, I wanted to just ask you a little bit about the reading seasons that you've had in your life because you actually have let me know there was a period of time in your life not too long ago, where you weren't reading that much for yourself at all. So, how, tell me about that? And then how and then it's changed so much in the time that I've known you for these past few years.

Mindy Brouse 35:31

Yeah, it has. Okay, so I grew up a reader. I loved reading, read a lot until probably late junior high. And then high school, I became really focused on friendships, I didn't read as much. And then not again until late college and early career teaching on my own. I read a ton. That's when I fell into the Nelson DeMille and John Grisham and devoured all of those books, Creighton, all that stuff. And then I became a mom and I started reading all the, you know, parenting books, how to be a good mom how to take care of your baby that they're sending home from the hospital with you, and you really don't have any clue what you're doing, all that stuff. As my kids got a little bit older, really, I kept on that train for a really long time. A lot of what I would call self help books on parenting or being a woman in the church or whatever, those kinds of things. I still read a ton of, well, not a ton, a lot of middle grade, because we always used a homeschooling curriculum that was invested heavily in literature. So then I kind of fell into a slump, where I didn't want to read at all Meredith because I was just tired of reading books that told me I needed to be better, and how to be better, and what I needed to do differently. And even those self help books can help, that's their design, my sensitivities and my struggles in different areas, were making me feel like "You just, you just need to keep being better. Everything you do isn't good enough, so here's another self help book." And I just, I was mad and tired of that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:18

So reading sort of became represented that to you reading was read chastisement and judgments. Yeah, and it wasn't a safe place. And it wasn't entertainment.

Mindy Brouse 37:28

It wasn't enjoyable. It was like, "Well, you need to read this so you can get better," which is lots of those books did help me. But in the long term, it just felt like reading was medicinal in a way that I didn't feel like, was emotionally great. That's where I found myself when you guys started the show, and that is when I realized, well, I'll go listen for Kaytee and see what they have to say. And I mean, you know, I became a huge fan. I loved the show immediately.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:57

So but you weren't, when you started listening you were listening only because your friend Kaytee was doing a podcast and you were support listening.

Mindy Brouse 38:05

But what happened is you guys kind of woke up a part of me that was like, "Hey, do you remember that Mindy loved stories?" And so I went from that to reading a lot.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:19

And way more than I read,

Mindy Brouse 38:21

and, and really kind of finding a part of myself again, that has nothing to do with, you know, being a mom, nothing to do with homeschooling nothing to do with being a wife, none of those things. It's just

about what I love. And not that I don't love those things, you know what I'm saying. I do. But just for pure, the pure love of story. But now in that season, I'm seeing these little seasons where "Okay I'm really struggling with depression," or "This pandemic is making me feel the weight of the world," and those kinds of seasons where I need to find specific genres or specific, even books that I need to be reading to help myself you and Kaytee have done that through four seasons of helping us all learn about different books, different genres, different quote, "wheelhouses", I had never even talked about that. All of that helped me go, "Okay, I don't have to love what everyone else loves."

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:20

So I see this as really being not only like you're "reading-aissance", it's like your, you know, your Renaissance back into reading, but you're really in your season of reading freedom. Like you're embracing all the things that reading can bring, and you're really letting go of the things that don't serve you with your reading. And that's, you know, that's really, really excellent. And I think you're right, I think one of the reasons why I wanted to talk about reading seasons, and I wanted people to hear us talk about the seasons that we've had in our lives because it's really important that we all realize that the way we're reading now is not necessarily the way or how much or at all the way it's going to be five weeks from now, five months from now, you know, five years from now. And so wherever you are in a particular reading season, I just want everyone to know that it's exactly right. So a lot of what I'll hear from listeners who write in to us, they'll say that they're just getting back into reading, after having had a couple of little ones. And there is absolutely nothing in my experience that will put a pall on your reading life for a while, not forever, if you don't want it to be there forever, than having babies. The year that I had Jackson, I read 11 books. The following year, I read 14 books for the entire year. Right now, again, those numbers are way more than a lot of people read in a year. So I'm not saying anything about that number, what I mean about that number, because you guys know, I don't care about quantity at all, for him, for me, for anybody. But what I know is that for me, that was a that represented a very small number of books compared to my normal reading. And so I mean, I've gone through seasons, like you. I grew up as a reader, read so much then got into college with an English major and I really didn't do much reading at all for pleasure during that period of time, because reading was representing learning for me during that time. And then right as I was graduating from college, I had my daughter, Devon. And so then I went into this period of time, where I was really where I went from reading, if I did read, I was reading serial killer books, I told the story about how I was reading Silence of the Lambs to Devon when I was breastfeeding her, but in a really happy voice. And so she so I would when I would read, that's what I would read, I went through a real serial killer season of my life, like all the Patricia Cornwell, you know, all the Mary Higgins Clark, I could possibly get my hands on. And then when I started having kids, all of a sudden, I didn't want to read that kind of really murderous stuff anymore. And you know, Mindy, and I say this, because I think it's a public service announcement. I read almost nothing but cozy mysteries for a decade, for a decade. It was all my murderous heart could take for a decade, because my babies were little, I married my husband. And so then I had more babies come into my life. And I just couldn't read about, you know, the missing five year old. I just couldn't, that wasn't the season for me to be doing that kind of reading. So thank heaven, I had book sales and cozy mysteries and all and I read, you know, series after series after series after series for 10 years. I read, that's all that I read. And it was wonderful reading, it was exactly what I needed for it to be in that season. And I began to come out of a little bit. And then I had Jackson. And then I was also working. And I was running the

company and all of that. And so my reading quantity went really really really far down for a couple of years.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:12

But then I kind of got my feet under me again, which in my experience with my friends is usually around the time that babies are a year and a half to two years old. They're usually sleeping a little bit more predictably and usually can start reading again. And then I went through a season where I was commuting a lot. And so all I did was read, I was reading on audiobook. So I went through this long season of audio book reading. And that was really the majority of my reading. And I read a lot of great books that way. And then segwayed into working from home and having, you know, the running the company and starting Currently Reading and then doing the kind of reading that I do now. So I read a lot more now, largely driven by the podcast because left to my own devices, I feel the season of my reading changing a little bit. I feel that I want to read a little bit slower. Okay, so I want to savor books a little bit more, but I need to keep up with the show so I have to strike that balance. And I'm finding a way to do that, I think really well. And I want to read I'm finding that I'm entering a new season, because sometimes it's about how much you can read. And sometimes it's about the kind of reading. So I've been reading a lot of murderful stuff, a lot of like, interesting premise fast, fast burn stuff. I feel in the past six months, especially that like this ship is kind of turning slowly a little bit. I will always read those kinds of books too because I need the variety. But I am wanting more character driven, really meatier books that I can really kind of chew on and take longer with the language, maybe talk about with people in a way that historically has not been something in my reading that I really cared that much about. I'm getting together with the Austin Literary Society. So I'm wanting more of that like community in my reading, which historically has not been something that I cared about. So I just, it's, I want everyone to think about where are you in your current reading season. What other reading seasons have you gone through? And then also, if you're feeling like the season that you're in right now is, you know, "I can't, I'm doing a lot of slumping, I don't, I'm DNFing a lot of books, I don't seem to have the concentration to read the books that I used to read. I'm being pulled toward books that don't feel like they're in my wheelhouse, but they're appealing to me and that feels weird", I just want to empower all of our listeners to realize that whatever reading season you're in, is the right one for you to be in right now. Lean into it, don't lean away from it, don't fight against it, because that's not going to help. And also know that it's likely, like hold on, because it's likely to change. If you're not happy with the reading season you're in right now, it's likely to change. If you used to read a lot and now you're a mama with a lot of littles and you feel like reading is lost to you, you will get reading back. So yeah, no matter how puzzled you feel, or if you feel like you're in a rhythm with reading, and you're like, I feel a little bit unsettled, because I'm reading more than ever before because all I want to do is read lean into that too. It's all it's all the way that it's supposed to be. And so understanding, you know, I'm always telling everyone that I think one, the best thing we can do for ourselves as readers is to know ourselves. And part of that it's to know where you are in your reading season. And just hold on to it loosely, because it's gonna change. And that's probably, you know, the next reading season will be right to. Alright, good. Well, I'm glad that we got a chance to talk about that. And now I want to be sure that we can press some of these books into our listeners hands. What book do you want to press this week?

Mindy Brouse 47:13

All right, this was one of my current reads the first time I was on, and you announced that I was going to be a sub host back in season two episode 19 with you, Meredith. I raved about it then and I'm going to rave about it today. I am pressing *The Stationery Shop* by Majan Kamali. This novel I have not forgotten all these all these years? Two years? Three.?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:37

Yeah, it's a long, it's felt like 10.

Mindy Brouse 47:39

However many years yeah. This novel begins in 1953, Tehran, in a stationery shop that is also a bookshop, where Roya and Bahman are introduced by the shop owner, kind of a little matchmaking going on. The two fall in love and are set to be married, but the night before the wedding, violence erupts in the city and the coup creates chaos that leaves the two lovers separated forever. This love story is heartbreaking and beautiful and tells not only the story of Iran, and its history, but how people's lives are forever changed by war, and how the relationship of countries also affects the relationships of people. It's a love story broken in two by countries a sudden shift. I found this unputdownable and I love the characters. Content warnings for riot violence, undiagnosed mental illness, rape, and self induced abortion. I still love this book. I usually prefer much happier ending. But this story ending felt authentic and beautiful. I thought about it a lot. It was one of my first purchases after becoming a Currently Reader addict. That's *The Stationery Shop* by Marjan Kamali.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:49

Oh, see, this is a perfect example of the kind of book that when you talked about it a couple years ago, was not even on my radar. But now this is the kind of book that I'm finding myself drawn to. Okay, mine is very different but kind of falls into the category of it seems like it might be a quickie, but it was really a relationship book because I really love this book. *The Wrong Mother* by Sophie Hannah. So I read this back in July of 2010. Here's the setup. Sally Thorning is watching the news with her husband when she hears the name she never thought she'd hear again. Mark Bretherick. It's a name that she shouldn't recognize. Last year, a work trip Sally had planned was canceled at the last minute. She was desperate for a break from juggling her job and her young family. And Sally didn't tell her husband that the trip had fallen through. Instead, she treated herself to a secret vacation in a remote hotel. Well, this isn't going to surprise anybody while she was there. Sally met a man. Mark Bretherick. All the details are the same, where he lives, his job, his wife Geraldine and his daughter, Lucy, except that the photograph on the news is of a man Sally has never seen before. And Geraldine and Lucy Bretherick are now dead. It's so good. It's so so good. So my book journal back again, I read this in 2010 says "What a great thriller. I absolutely ate this novel up. It had perfect pacing, great characters, very smart writing and details that made the story fun to follow beginning to end." I loved guessing at the various aspects of the mystery. And I was super into the two lead police detectives, which you know, Mindy is always an element that I love in my thrillers when there's police deteceives. And I hope that they appear in more of her novels. Okay, so apparently when I read this in 2010, I didn't realize I was an animal back in 2010. I didn't realize that I was jumping into what was in fact a series starring these two lead characters. And there are now nine of them in the series. So if you like this, you'll have a lot of other books to read.

Secondly, I have Sophie Hannah on my mind because she is the author who was named, she was officially sanctioned by the estate of Agatha Christie to write more of the Hercule Poirot novels. And I read the second one of those that I've read recently, and I just love her. And I also watched a long interview with her talk about some awards that she was getting for these novels. And I just really liked her as a person. She's very funny. She reminded me a lot of Catherine Ryan Howard only she's British. So again, this is a fantastic thriller. If this is the kind of thing that you're looking to put into your beach bag as you go on spring break, or you go on your early summer vacations, make sure to put *The Wrong Mother* by Sophie Hannah on your list.

Mindy Brouse 51:46

There it is. I didn't need another book for Hawaii. But I guess I needed another book for Hawaii.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 51:51

There you go. Now that's one that I would take to Hawaii. I mean it's gonna, it's a perfect airplane book. You will just not even look up from the book the whole flight. So that is it for this week. As a reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me I'm Meredith at [@meredith.reads](https://www.instagram.com/meredith.reads) on Instagram. And you can find Kaytee at [@notesonbookmarks](https://www.instagram.com/notesonbookmarks) on Instagram.

Mindy Brouse 52:12

And you can find me Mindy at [@gratefulforgrace](https://www.instagram.com/gratefulforgrace) on Instagram.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:16

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 currentlyreadingpodcast.com.

Mindy Brouse 52:25

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Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:34

And if you love what you heard today, and you want to hear more and more and more of us talking about books, become a patreon supporter for just \$5 a month, and you will get a ton of additional content. You can also rate and review us on Apple podcasts and shout us out on social media. All of those things really help us be able to find our perfect audience.

Mindy Brouse 52:57

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:02

Alright, until next week, may your coffee be hot

Mindy Brouse 53:05

and your book unputdownable.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:07

Happy reading Mindy.

Mindy Brouse 53:08

Happy reading Meredith