



Season 4, Episode 6: Breathless Books + An Intro to Book Flights

Mon, 9/6 • 59:02

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 already know, we never shy away from having those strong opinions. So get ready.

Kaytee Cobb 00:25

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 I have been practicing all my life for my next readerly role.

Kaytee Cobb 00:44

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico. And if you give me a water feature, and entertain my children, I'll read all day long. This is episode number six of season four. And we are so glad you're here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:58

All right, Kaytee, I'm glad you're here. But you sound a little even sexier than you normally do. You always sound sexy, but you sound super sexy. today.

Kaytee Cobb 01:07

I do have my my phone operator voice today, Meredith because I have had a little bit of a cold. I feel much better, but you guys might be able to hear it a little bit in my voice. And that's okay. We live lives. We're real humans. So we're going to just power through and keep recording because we know you want some Currently Reading in your ears.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:25

Exactly. They would rather hear your sexy voice but not hear you at all. All right. Okay, good. Well, we want to do a couple things right up here at the top. First, we're gonna let you guys know that our deep dive today is going to be on a topic that I have been surprised how many questions we have gotten. And that is we're going to deep dive on my process that I call book flights. It's the number one process that I use to select what book I'm going to read next. And you guys apparently have a lot of details that you want to know about this process. So we're gonna get into that today. But first, it's the first episode a

month and so we wanted to talk just a little bit about our Patreon because we love it. And we work so hard to put together great content for all of our supporters on Patreon. Kaytee, it's \$5 a month, we are coming up on 1400 supporters, which is absolutely crazy. And I think that you and I, we really really believe in our heartiest hearts, that the reason we have so many supporters is because we have some fantastic Patreon content, like Kaytee Reads Too Much is especially in its brand new format, All Things Murderful with Meredith, where I talk about just mysteries and thrillers very very backlist. And, of course, the Indie Press List. But Kaytee, we just did our survey. And what 1000 people answered the survey roughly?

Kaytee Cobb 02:52

Over 100 people Yeah.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 02:53

Which is that's a lot of data. And here's the thing. None of those things are the number one reason why you guys become supporters of Currently Reading. Kaytee, what's the number one reason?

Kaytee Cobb 03:04

You guys love that we do not break up your book talk with ads, that we are here from beginning to end, just to talk about books, and reading and bookish moments and deep dives and pressing books into your hands. And you know that from the moment we start to the moment we end, that's what you're gonna get over here on Currently Reading. So that is very exciting for us to know. But it was also like, oh, all that stuff that we do. It's just a bonus. That's the real reason. Right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:32

Exactly, I definitely understand it. Because I too appreciate the fact that you can listen to almost an hour of book talk with no ads. But it does kind of make me giggle that we do all this hard work on the content. And they're like, "yeah, just don't give us ads, we're good". So add this right to this is our ad, which we just do one time a month. So again, if you want to join us because you love the fact that we only have one ad a month and that's for our own selves, go ahead and hop over to [Patreon.com/currentlyreadingpodcast](https://patreon.com/currentlyreadingpodcast) and join us for \$5 a month. It's very simple, very easy. And by the way, you get all the extra content. Alright, Kaytee, so let's start off the way that we love to do and let's talk about our bookish moments of the week other than having a cold. Hopefully you've had some good bookish moments this week.

Kaytee Cobb 04:17

Well my cold kind of comes from my bookish moment. So last weekend, we went camping with another family out in the New Mexico wilderness because we are one of the eight bazillion people who bought a camper during the pandemic. It was full of gorgeous vistas and wildlife and a chilly river which is key... bumps and bruises for the kids filthy happy children. But it's my bookish moment because more than ever before I was able to bring along not only all of my buddy reads and my slow but steady books, but my regular books as well and read a whole heck of a lot during this camping trip. Including finishing one book in just two days. It was the perfect combination of children entertained, knowing they were safe, like being able to see them because it was kind of wide open, the background white noise of being

outside and the river nearby, and the other mom with us being an introvert. Hi, Hayley, thanks for coming. who really wanted to read my book when I finished it. So I wanted to like power through so I could pass it off to her before we even packed up the campers on the last day. And if every camping trip could be that successful, I'd want to go every weekend, it was fabulous.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 05:27

That is a really good combination of circumstances in your kids are finally getting to that age where you can start getting more of that time when you're on vacation and at home. So exactly kind of on that you're on that good side of parenting now that your youngest is three. So yeah, it's, um, it's the swing up, I'm so glad that you got that time. Well, speaking of that, speaking of getting good time with kids and enjoying that, I am super excited. I said in my bite size intro that I've been practicing training for my next readerly role, all of my life. I am super excited to tell you guys what you may have already seen on my Instagram, which is that I am going to be a grandmother, my daughter Devon and her husband Mark are due with a baby boy in February of 2022. And I could not be more excited. I am so excited to be a grandma, I've just been waiting for this for a really long time. Devon and Mark are really ready for this next role in this next phase of their life. So that makes it really exciting. And so I am going to have a new reader to raise. Devon and Mark have empowered me completely to create baby boys library and I'm very much looking forward, he is going to have the most amazing library in his room. And we are just going to get to do all of that, you know, the most fun part of parenting for me has always been the reading part, especially when they're really little. And so we get to now to do that completely over again. So I am so excited about it. Being a grandma is just my absolute dream.

Kaytee Cobb 07:13

I am so excited. Also Meredith, I know you're going to be a wonderful grandma and having to like, keep this secret for weeks and weeks and weeks. I'm so happy that it's out in the world now because now we all get to share your joy. So I can't wait for baby Griffey to get to meet his grandma and get to be raised into a reader by somebody who does such a great job doing that. So congrats to your whole family. I love it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:35

Oh, thank you so much. Yeah, I'm in here, we're planning on having him call me Mimi. So I'm getting used to being called Mimi, which will be really exciting. And so I live in Austin, Devon and Mark and baby will live in Memphis, where they live in Memphis. And so I have either nine hour drives ahead of me, which will be lots of reading time, or plenty of time on the on the plane. So either way, I'm trying to look at the upside of the fact that we live nine hours apart. I would love for us to live much, much closer. But the upside is lots of reading time as I travel back and forth and spend a lot of time with them. So yeah, that's going to be super, super exciting. And it's been wonderful that so many of our listeners have shared how excited they are because they have loved being a reading a reading grandma and sharing that part of their lives with their grandchildren. So that's going to be a new, exciting adventure. Okay. Let's move on Kaytee to talking about our current reads. What's your first read this week?

Kaytee Cobb 08:32

Okay, my first book this week is called *The Liar's Dictionary* by Eley Williams. This is a novel it's dual timeline that has some mystery, some laugh out loud moments and some word nerdery, which I just made up of the highest order. Let me tell you about it. In the Victorian Era, we have Peter Winceworth. He's a lexicographer working on the S section of Swansby's Encyclopaedic Dictionary. He's burnt out, he's bored. And while he works, he thinks of things that don't have a word for them, but should. For example, he coins a word for the feeling of walking into a spiderweb. Which, why don't we have a word for that? We need a word for that, right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:11

Yes, yes.

Kaytee Cobb 09:12

He keeps the entry separate. But like, you know, next to his computer monitor if you lived in our era, but he enjoys the exercise. It keeps his brain from feeling like it's rotting away in his skull. In the current time, we have Mallory, she's a young intern employed by Swansby's, and is helping digitize their collection. Along the way, she's tasked with uncovering mountweazels. Mountweazel is a term that means the phenomenon of false entries within dictionaries and works of reference used to safeguard against copyright infringement. So if someone publishes a new dictionary, and it has the same made up word that you put into your dictionary, you know that they were copying you, right? Ingenious. She also has to answer the phone, which rings daily with bomb threats to the building, which very much upsets her partner whose name is Pip, which I love. The narrative slowly come together as Winceworth gets evermore dissatisfied with his job, and the phone calls to Mallory's office escalate every day. This book was delightful. It's a word lovers book, each chapter has a title that follows the alphabet. So the first chapter is A is for artful, and you get further along and you've got Q is for queer, right all the way through to Z. There's little tidbits of history sprinkled throughout, and a cover that gives me heart eyes. I really enjoyed the audio version of it. And I ended up giving it four stars because I loved the way that it came together. And I loved unraveling the pretty small and tame mystery at the center of it. So this one was *The Liar's Dictionary* by Eley Williams.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:49

All right. So my first book actually did come to me as a part of a book flight. So it was booked that I had heard absolutely nothing about it. My library, simply was interested in the cover, grabbed it. We'll talk more about that in our deep dive, and ended up reading it all the way through and it was very interesting. This book is called *The Herd* by Andrea Bartz. Have you ever seen this book anywhere? Have you seen the cover of it?

Kaytee Cobb 11:12

No.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 11:13

The Herd by the way, is h e r d. Okay. Here's the setup. This book, I absolutely love the premise. Okay, it largely starts out as the story of a company and in this book, we're focused on the elite women only

co working space with the interesting name and logo, The Herd and the H E R portion of it is always in its trademark purple. Okay. It's the in place for the up and coming New York women to be and to be seen. Gen Zers scramble to apply for membership to this community that prides itself on mentorship and female empowerment. You work there by day, or even maybe you don't. And then in the evenings, you get together for Pilates and classes on entrepreneurship and origami as meditation. It's a whole scene. And Eleanor is a queen among the Herd's sun filled rooms. She's admired and feared even as she strives to be warm and approachable. As the head of PR, one of our characters is Hannah, who is working around the clock to prepare for a huge announcement from Eleanor, one that will change the trajectory of the Herd forever. The media is all a twitter about whatever will be announced. Then, on the night of the big Herd news conference, Eleanor vanishes without a trace. Everybody has a theory about what made Eleanor run. But when the police suggest foul play, everyone becomes the suspect. Eleanor's husband, other Herders, the men's rights groups that have had it out for the Herd since its launch, and even Eleanor's closest friends. Where is Eleanor? And did she leave voluntarily? Or has she been purposely disappeared? So this again, I love the sweet spot of the it's sort of workplace, I like a workplace as a setting. There's lots of good details having to do with the founding of the company, and how they decided on all of their branding and the niche that they were gonna go after. And then there's this mystery, right? So it's kind of like this combo, that was really appealing to me. So overall, I would say it's, it's definitely a thriller. And I would say it's a perfectly fine thriller. It would for sure, however, be termed as a popcorn thriller, because it was entertaining and fun. But it's not something that is going to necessarily stick with you forever. And I honestly think there's, at least in my reading, there's a place for that. It's not stupid. But it's not. it's not like a great classic of the genre. It's just kind of in the middle. And it was just kind of fun and entertaining. This book came out in 2020. Again, I would think given its premise that it would have gotten a little more uplift, but I have really not seen it almost anywhere. It definitely gives you goop vibes. So one of the main clear one of the main characters is clearly someone who is supposed to be loosely based on Gwyneth Paltrow, kind of that woo woo, woman founder that everyone is very attracted to, but also kind of intimidated by. And it also plays a lot on the kind of cult brands especially like the WeWork brand, which I ended up reading more on that, you know, after I read this book, so that's, that's the vibe that we're working with here. The book has a lot of fun details, especially for Gen Z and Millennials, I think you're really going to see yourself in this book in a way that you will enjoy. And it has fun details in the publishing world. So that was also kind of interesting because there's someone who's writing a book about this. So you're also getting details about how that book deal like what kind of information do you have to get? What are the goods that you have to get in order to get a book deal to write about a company. So that was interesting for me too. I would say, if you really liked the, if you really like Gossip Girl, the show, this book will be a very, very good fit for you. I was definitely interested all the way through. But again, I will say that I probably won't remember a lot of the details for the long term. But on the plus side, it's also not overly gory, which a lot of people are looking for. They want to read a thriller that doesn't have a lot of gore. This definitely falls into that category. And it had sufficient twists to keep me interested. And that pretty much is exactly all I need my popcorn thrillers to do for me, so I'm going to call it a popcorn thriller. But in this case, that is not an insult. This is The Herd by Andrea Bartz.

Kaytee Cobb 15:53

That's fun. I, I like when you can read something that's just like, you know what, that was just what I needed. And I don't have to remember it later. And that's totally okay.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 16:03

Yeah, but you know, it's interesting. I read it about six weeks ago. And as I'm talking through it here, I actually remember a lot of the details. So it's actually maybe more memorable than when I wrote these notes. I thought it was I thought it was going to be and I think that's partly because I did end up reading more on the WeWork thing. And I think my brain is making all of those connections. So gotcha. That's, that's interesting. What's your next book, Kaytee?

Kaytee Cobb 16:24

Okay, my second book this week is called Dial A for Aunties by Jesse Q. Sutanto. So we're gonna chat about this book, I don't even know where to put it in my head, much less in a bookstore. It's like comedic murder or murder girl comedy or something. I'm not sure. We have our main character Meddelin Chan, she's our protagonist, set up once again on a blind date by her mom and aunts, because their close knit Chinese Indonesian family just wants her to be happy. When the date is driving her home, and tries to get fresh with him met he teases him, which accidentally kills him in a car crash. Oops. There's no service. So instead of being able to call 911 and say, Oh, my gosh, we were in a wreck, please come help. She drives the red car home, she pushes the body out of the way drives the red car home, and freaks out to her family who are all too eager to help her out of the bind that she's in. Thus begins a comedy of errors moving a dead body from place to place. All while the family wedding planning business is trying to put on the wedding of a billionaire on a nearby island. They're in like San Diego, California area like Coronado Island adjacent. I picked this one up for two reasons. One, one of my trusted reading sources really enjoyed it. And I was hoping for that similar comedy murder by to Finlay Donovan is Killing It. I wanted that same kind of slapsticky but also really fun and a bit of mystery element. And two, Sarah's Bookshelves Live interviewed the author, and she was delightful and charming, and I really enjoyed the interview. However, I found the charm that I heard in that interview really lacking in the book itself. There is one plotline that has played out so many times over and over again, that I felt like I could have skipped probably 50 to 75 pages, and not have missed anything, because the same thing was still happening. The premise and the family and dynamics while fun seemed kind of overwrought to me, like above and beyond what they needed to be. So she had to try too hard to make it funny as far as I could feel from my end of things. While I can see how this could be a big hit and a fun romp for me. For many, for me, it was a slog, and it did not scratch that Finlay Donovan edge that I was looking for. So if somebody has a Finlay Donovan read-alike I want it. I want to hear about it. But this one was Dial A for Aunties by Jesse Q. Sutanto.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 18:57

Alright, so my next book is the rare nonfiction books that I'm going to bring to the show because I just I just do not find time for enough nonfiction in my reading. But this one you guys have heard about in several places. Most notably, we have all heard our fantastic friend Laura Tremaine talk about this book. This is Breath by James Nestor. So you guys have heard have heard her talk about this, but I'm just gonna give you a really quick setup, because it's very, very interesting. And it is one of those books

that I'm picking, if you're at all interested in this, pick it up because it's very, very well done. So here's the setup. Alright, so we all know that we all have to breathe. In fact, we do it 25,000 times a day, which is amazing to think about, right? So but as a species, basically where we find ourselves today is humans breathe wrong. And that just freaks me out. But this book, basically this book is it's written by by journalist James Nestor. He travels the world to figure out basically what what went wrong with our breathing? And how can we fix it? And how can we fix it? The answers are not found where you would expect to find them like in a pulmonary pulmonology lab or other kinds of testing. But instead, he goes to ancient burial sites, secret Soviet facilities, New Jersey choir schools, and then he goes to the smoggy smoggy streets of Sao Paulo, Brazil. He tracks down men and women who were exploring the hidden science between the ancient breathing practices like pranayama. And he teams up with pulmonary tinkerers to scientifically test long held beliefs about how we breathe. And in fact, he does some of these amazing experiments in the book on himself, experiments that really amazed me at how committed and brave he was to do because I would not touch these things with a 10 foot pole. So modern research is showing that making even small adjustments to the way that we inhale and exhale can do everything from jumpstarting our athletic performance, rejuvenating in a major way our internal organs, it can help us stop snoring, it can ease our asthma and our auto immune disease. And it can even straighten our spines. In *Breath*, James Nestor turns the conventional wisdom of what we thought we knew about this most basic and obvious function on its head, and you will never breathe the same again. You guys, this book is a true revelation. I'm so glad that Laura talked about it. Because I never knew most of what I read in this book, it turns out, not only I mean, that I very specifically breathe wrong, I breathe through my mouth, I don't breathe deeply enough, I breathe too rapidly, which is a major problem for me. He talks about people with anxiety, you guys know I have had a panic anxiety disorder since I was six, or that's when it was diagnosed. My breathing rapidity is a major part of how I feel in my body. And because I'm so often anxious, while I might not look anxious from the outside, my heart my resting heart rate tends to be higher when I'm when my anxiety is flaring. And my breathing is more rapid. He talks a lot about those functions and how they make us feel overall, how it can affect our sleep, how it can affect how we just feel in our bodies, which really resonated with me, because I do feel it in my body to the point where I will often even when my anxiety is flaring, I can feel my heart beating in my body, which is surprisingly uncomfortable. And by breathing more correctly, by being more conscious with how you're breathing, not just when you're doing 20 minutes of meditation one time a day, but all the time, you can really make a lot of those symptoms feel much better. And so I legitimately my, my feeling in my body was legitimately made better when I started to concentrate more on these things. And really to understand why it is that breath is not equal. So if I breathe in deeply through my mouth, it is not the same oxygen content, as if I breathe deeply in through my nose. And it is not the same breath. I thought it was all totally equal. And so there's lots of things that he talks about in this book, small things and large things, depending on your life and the different issues that you might have in your body that can be done to make those pieces better. And also seriously these experiments that he performs on his own self. I cannot I mean like as someone who's very triggered by my breathing and my heart rate and kind of like the feeling of not being able to breathe. That's an anxiety trigger for me, some of these things that he did in order to really show commitment to what he was writing about and that he was really interested in how it actually worked. They were amazing and very, very brave. So this book substantively affected me positively and I'm so glad that I read it. So this is *Breath* by James Nestor.

Kaytee Cobb 24:15

This is one of those books that I saw Laura Tremaine when she talked about it, I, I've heard her talk about it. And I think about it regularly, even though I haven't read it. So now that you've completely talked me into it, Meredith. I'm really looking forward to actually like getting the knowledge into my body because I think about *Breath: the science of how we breathe* all the time, without knowing anything of the content of the book. So good job, thanks for making sure that I put that higher on my TBR

Meredith Monday Schwartz 24:43

Yes, and I'm absolutely sure that it's great on audio. But this is one of those books that I really appreciate it I got it from the library initially ended up buying a copy again because I wanted to be able to take notes and mark it up right so for that reason, this is one that I really recommend in print, but get into it in whatever way you can. Let's get into it. All right, Kaytee, what is your third book?

Kaytee Cobb 25:05

My third book this week is one that I read while I was camping. It is *Norse Mythology* by Neil Gaiman. This book is gold, you guys pure gold. This is a five star read. I love this book. Take a note. This is just what it sounds like. Neil Gaiman takes us through the origins of North Norse Gods. I'm a screw that up every time, all the way through the end of their story in Ragnarok. And yes, if you are a fan of the Marvel comic universe, and Chris Hemsworth I mean, Thor, you will see those threads throughout the story. And yes, if you are imagining Chris Hemsworth while you're listening to the story, or reading the story, it's not gonna hurt anything. Okay, the audio book for this one is read by the author, which is great, because a few weeks ago when we talked about author crushes, one of our bookish friends mentioned that she has a crush on Neil Gaiman's voice, because his voice is incredible. And that is legit. Gaiman isn't just a great narrator though. He's a great writer. He takes this classic mythology, modernizes the language so that it's very easy to read, and fashions a story arc that makes you feel like you can see the complete narrative as a whole. This book isn't long, the audio is like six hours, the the book says it's 300 pages, but honestly, it's easy breezy to read. It's funny and charming, and feels a little bit like the comedies of Shakespeare mixed with the mythology retelling of Circe. So if you smashed those two together, and then you roll them in a blanket of Gaiman charm, you just you don't want to sleep on this one. I immediately passed it along to my children so that they can listen on their Alexa device because it's an adult book, but there's nothing in here that's unsuitable for middle graders. So there's a few mentions of going to bed or making love but there's nothing spicy at all. I smiled throughout and I do plan to reread this one which is a little weird because I don't reread very often, but it's just that fun. I'm so grateful to Morgan Tallman for always loving Neil Gaiman so much. And that's the reason that I ended up snagging this one as an audible deal when it was on sale. And I'm so glad I did because it was just it was like a perfection in my ears while I was camping. I you know, I used it while I was like doing dishes or making s'mores for the kids or whatever where I didn't have to be fully present. As long as there were no flaming marshmallows, and I just loved it from beginning to end. It was fantastic. It's *Norse Mythology* by Neil Gaiman.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 27:37

That sounds very interesting. So Kaytee, is it a novel? Is it stories? What is it?

Kaytee Cobb 27:43

I don't know. So it's kind of like even when you think of like Greek mythology, there's like, Zeus when he meets the Titans, right? And then there's Hercules goes to Earth, right? And each story could be read by itself but as a full story, it's like a complete history of Norse mythology. And so it's like each chunk could easily be read by itself but it's great as a complete set.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:10

They're connected together through the characters in the character arc Okay,

Kaytee Cobb 28:13

them and there's a great even on audio, there's a PDF that that tells you the characters and the Norse words that you might not recognize as an English speaker. So you can flip through that if you're not remembering wait like who's Pharaoh or who's Loki and get a better handle on where you are in the story.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:30

All right, well, we both are slotting five star books into our third book as we are often are want to do. Alright Kaytee, the book I'm so excited to be talking about today is The Nothing Man by Catherine Ryan Howard. You guys I am very serious when I say that this is definitely going to be one of my top 10 books of the year. I loved this book. Okay. Here's the setup. At the age of 12, Eve Black was the only member of her family to survive an encounter with a serial attacker known as the Nothing Man. Eve is now an adult and she is obsessed with identifying the man who killed her family and destroyed her life. Supermarket security guard Jim Doyle has just started reading The Nothing Man, the true crime memoir that Eve has written about her efforts to track down her family's killer. As he turned each page his rage grows. Because Jim is not interested in reading about the Nothing Man. He is the Nothing Man. Jim soon begins to realize how dangerously close Eve is getting to the truth. He knows that she will not give up until she finds him and he has no choice but to try to stop her first. Oh my gosh, total five star mystery/thriller. I'm giving it both I'm giving it that moniker because it's not just a thriller. It is not just a mystery. It is the perfect combination of both .Kaytee, you just finished this right? Like

Kaytee Cobb 30:06

Yes. And I love it when this happens, because I like when I have something super fresh that you just like that you're bringing to because I agree five stars. So spoiler alert, right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 30:15

No, absolutely. When you told me you were finishing that I was like, Oh, she doesn't even know that this is what I'm bringing to the show when we record. Okay, so all the way back in October of 2020. I spent quite a bit of time actually figuring this out. Our listener, Allison Downs was the person who initially put this on my radar. And that's how it's gotten onto everybody's radar. So Allison, thank you so much for this. Here's what she said back then. And I think it's a really good description of how I felt when I read it. Here's what Allison said, "THRILLER LOVERS" all caps. She's shouting here, "I have a five star book alert for you". Allison says "I do not love thrillers, I often find that they have pacing issues

and stupid twists. But every once in a while I pick one up anyway. And for once I was not disappointed. I wanted to break into the house of every thriller lover I know and leave them a copy of this book". Isn't that the perfect way to describe this book because I felt the same way. This was the one that I posted on Instagram in the middle of our summer break. Because I could not wait for this day when I was going to be able to bring it to the show. I was like everyone needs to know about it now because it was such a good book. And so it's so rare to read. I think we talk about this all the time, a book that is this propulsive and yet is still really well written. I really wish that wasn't true. But it is. And there was never a moment in *The Nothing Man* that I thought it dragged. Every chapter was there for a reason. And I got to say... the book within a book which can be a little bit dicey. The book within a book was actually my very favorite part because it's a fantastic True Crime book that's hidden within this mystery. If you were riveted by *I'll Be Gone in the Dark*, you will definitely want to pick this book up. It feels loosely inspired by that story. But it's definitely not a copy of that story. I don't think there's anything that feels like, Oh my gosh, I really because it's still really fresh and it's its own story. But again, I just feel like there if you liked *I'll Be Gone in the Dark* but you would rather it be fiction than *Nothing Man*, this is going to be the book for you. In fact, Catherine Ryan Howard is going to be doing an author event with *Fabled* in the not too distant future. And I am hoping to ask her specifically, is there a connection between those two stories because I would love to know if she was inspired by that story to write this. I have no idea. One thing I love about Howard's writing is that she lets us play along. And you guys know that is a huge thing for me. This was one of those books, which really struck a nerve. And I love it when that happens. When I did post about it on Instagram. A lot of people started picking it up and deciding to read it. And that always makes me a little bit nervous when I see it happening. Because you know, I'm worried have I oversold something. But this time, everyone I heard from said that they really really loved it. And that makes me so happy. There are of course heavy trigger warnings that you would find in any serial killer book, you definitely need to know that those are here. This is violent. There are all kinds of killings, including children. So you need to be really, really careful. I've heard that it's wonderful on audio. But I liked it in print, because I kept flipping back and forth between the main narrative and the other narrative to just see kind of, to remember things and kind of piece things together because I felt like I actually had a shot at solving some parts of this crime. I will end by saying that Catherine Ryan Howard has become an absolute auto buy author for me. I've already read another one of her books, *Distress Signals*, which I'll talk about on a future show. But if you've read *The Nothing Man*, and you want to jump into another of her books, pick up *Distress Signals*. I absolutely loved it. And I can't wait to sit in on the *Fabled* event and to hear her fantastic Irish voice in her Irish accent in person. So this is *The Nothing Man* by Catherine Ryan Howard.

Kaytee Cobb 34:27

And after you talked about it on Instagram, Meredith, a lot of people came to us and said good news. I found it on Kindle Unlimited. Good news. I found it on my library's Hoopla. Good news, it's on Scribd. So if they're like, if you have anywhere that you can get books from, you're probably going to be able to get this book, which is great. Because if you love Meredith's recommendations, you guys, this is gold. This book is so good. I've already I had the paper copy. I have already given it to somebody else, even though like I told you I just finished it two days ago, a day ago. Yeah, I've already handed it over. So

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:59

yeah. In fact, the day I finished my my copy, I drove it over to my really good friend's house who just loves books like this, because I just it's one of those books you want to put into everybody's hands because it's really, really well done. Elizabeth from fabled and I were talking because she read it on her vacation, and she absolutely loved it too after hearing about it on on Instagram, and she was like, she is in she picked up more of her books, too. And Elizabeth and I were like, why is Catherine Ryan Howard not bigger than she is? So we I mean, we are going to just blow her up because she, she is the the kind of author that we are looking for. She's writing smart books that are super propulsive, but don't make you feel gross for reading them. And she's not talking down to her, you know, to the to her readers. It's smart, but really, really well done. It's just absolutely perfect. So yes, pick up. In fact, I have two more of her books on my TBR right now including her brand new one, which is called 56 Days, which is, was actually COVID like a COVID lockdown related mystery. Something happens while they're in lockdown. Catherine Ryan Howard, we are coming for you, sister, we are going all of us are gonna read your books. And we are loving them. She's really nice, too. By the way, she like she's a really, really she's one of those authors who's very interesting on Instagram. And she's super interactive and just appreciates when people talk about her. So she's one of those people that like, you love her writing. And she's also great in like, as a person. So it's just that one two punch.

Kaytee Cobb 35:10

That's so wonderful, the best.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 36:38

So let's start talking about our deep dive today, we have gotten a ton of questions about something that I talked about on the show and on my Instagram all the time, which is the way that I choose my next book almost every time not 100% of time, but almost every time I do what is called what I call a "book flight". And it's inspired by the fact that I you know, you can go to like a brewery and you can get a beer, you can get a flight of beers. And they're like little tiny glasses, just a little bit of like eight different kinds of beer. Johnny and I love to do this. And so that's called a flight. And so that's why I call this a book flight. It's you, you basically big picture, you get a pile of books that you're trying to decide between, and you try out a little bit of those books. And then you just go with the one that is most pulling you in. That's what a book flight is at the biggest kind of 35,000 foot level.

Kaytee Cobb 37:34

In the Meredith definition of it. There are other definitions of the term book flight. This is the one we're working with.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:41

Yes, right. Well, so Anne Bogel calls a book flight "two or more books that can that can or should be read together because they complement each other in the topic or that something about them pairs nicely together". So that's another good use of the word book flight, absolutely.

Kaytee Cobb 37:58

Okay, Meredith, I am going to play listener here, because I want to know the whole thing, I have all the questions for you. And I'm assuming are ones that you've gotten personally sent to you. So first, I want to start at the very beginning and just take us through the process. You go to your library, I assume, or maybe you're pulling off your shelves, but I want to know the whole thing. Do you put on holds? Do you let bookish serendipity guide you? How do you come up with the stack of five to 10 that you're dipping into?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:24

Right? Okay, so first of all, for me a book flight could apply to library books, or, you know, if I decide I'm going to pull five books, for example, off of my shelf and decide between those, so it can apply to either one, most of the time. And for the purposes of our discussion today, I'll just talk about the fact that this is how I choose what I'm going to read from my library. So the biggest question I get along those lines is, okay, so are these all books that you put on hold? The majority of the books that I get from the library are ones that over the course of the week, I will, you know, get recommendations, you know, all the ways that these things come to us, I put them on hold in the library if they're available. And then I usually have, gosh, at least five if not, you know, up to 12 books that are available to me every week that way, because I really like to get a large number of books to do a book flight on. So when I put books on hold, for example, or when I use bookish serendipity at the library, which means I just like the cover of a book or I glanced at the inside flap, and I'm kind of interested, my bar is very, very low. Because I really want to let a large number of books come to me, because you never know when you're going to happen upon that gold. So I don't sit there and really dither like, oh, should I take this out of the library or shouldn't? If in doubt, check it out. That is my model sticker. Because the reality is that we have talked to countless librarians. Including my librarians at my fantastic Lake Travis library, shout out to the people the Lake Travis Community Library here in Lakeway, Texas because they, they really are the reason that I can do all of this, they never make me feel ashamed of picking up as many books as I have, because they've really let us know. And, you know, librarians everywhere have said, circulation is a big part of our budget. So the more books that we check out and check back in, the better that is for our library. So yes, I do try to be very responsible. So I try to do my book flights quickly. Because what I don't want to do is check out a lot of books and sit on them keeping other patrons from being able to read them, I'm very much not in favor of that. So I tried to turn them around quickly, because I don't want to be selfish. But I do want to robustly use my library. So I pick up all my holds, I usually let myself spend 10 or 15 minutes kind of roaming the shelves just because I find that fun on a Saturday. And then I will just grab a book like The Herd that I just talked about with a book that just I happen to think the cover was interesting, I read the first paragraph of the back flap, tucked it in my library, if in doubt, check it out, then I get home, I put them all on my coffee table that sits right in front of my chair in the living room, which is where I spend most of my time. And I just kind of behold them. And I just enjoy them. I literally spend...

Kaytee Cobb 41:31

Like an oil painting of them and

Meredith Monday Schwartz 41:32

Welcome to my home. Usually what I try to do too, is I try to no I'm not even I'm not even BSing you I legitimately am like "Welcome to my home". And so then I usually try to also put a stack photo most weeks, I'll put a stack photo on Instagram and just say kind of which ones do I want to get a sense of which ones other people are interested in me reading. So there's that piece of it. But then here's what I do with my book flight. I only do about five books at a time. Okay, so when I do this, I do this kind of in sessions, because if I do more than five books at a time, it's too much. So I just literally take the top five books of that, that library stack, I don't choose any further than that. I just take those top five books, I bring them closer to me on my my big chair. And I just begin to read the first chapter, the first 10 or 15 pages, the first however much I'm feeling like reading. Sometimes very frankly, I will open up a book and within the first five or six sentences, something about the style, right puts me off. And I'm like, okay, not for me right now. It doesn't mean it's not a good book, it doesn't mean I'll never read it. I'm just saying that's, that's going on a pile of "back to the library", because it's just not for me right now. So I will go through those first five, and I will decide I will sit you know, whichever one if there's one or two, or sometimes five, where I'm like, Ooh, that sounds really interesting. I will just quickly close it and put it into my "Yes, I'm gonna, I'm gonna think further on this book" pile. And then I just go through that stack in exactly that way until I've gone all the way through and decided, yes, I want to explore this more. No, these are immediately going back to the library. And that's usually a very quick process. It doesn't take me long to figure out what I'm kind of generally in the mood for. So then I'll take a stack of say 12. And maybe I'll be down to four or five at that point. Because now the bar has been lifted. Right? So now, now I really these are not necessarily ones I'm going to finish, but these are ones that are now on my shelf. So as I finish a book, this is the pile of library books that I'll be like, what have the rest of these do I want to pick up? So I that's generally how I'll do that. There are times however, where I will do that first run through that that's supposed to be quick and kind of just telling me yes, no, yes, no, yes, no. And sometimes there will be books that just draw me into the point like The Nothing Man, where I'm like, Oh, yeah, I don't, I'm not even going to finish my book flight because it's all over. This book is what's being read right now. And then I'll just leave the rest of those books from that book flight for a day or two while I finish whatever book I'm reading, and then I'll continue with my book flight. So sometimes there will be books that just suck me into the point where I'm like, Oh, yeah, I'm finishing it.

Kaytee Cobb 44:26

Right, you're 20 pages in and you have to know what's on page 400 right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:30

It's just, it just is so perfect for my mood for everything that I just let myself sink into it. And again, what I'm trying to do is I'm trying to really, not only is this helpful for my reading, but in life, it's really helpful to learn to trust your intuition. trust your gut. Like really wherever your gut center is, I usually point to my belly because I'm a I'm a One and that's where my gut center is. But if it's your head, your heart, wherever you feel those things. This is a way to practice listening to what am I in the mood for right now? What is pulling me in, even though maybe it's something that is completely out of my wheelhouse. Library at Mount Char is a really good example. I picked that up because I thought it was a book about books. Guess what spoiler alert, it is not. But that's that low bar. Basically, I picked it up because the cover and the title were interesting. It is one of the most unforgettable books I've ever

read. Because I let my intuition say, you know what, I'm just gonna keep reading, I don't know what's happening, but I am drawn in. So for me, this is largely an intuition kind of workout, I want to keep my intuition muscle strong.

Kaytee Cobb 45:39

Okay, so let's say you have a stack of five, you've put two to the side, they're not for you right now. And then you have three more, and you feel similarly about all three of them. None of them is *The Nothing Man*. None of them is like, you will read me immediately. How do you choose between the kind of the, the high bar but not pulled you in immediately? Do you read another 20 pages?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:05

Right. So usually, what I'll do is really take a moment to say, okay, so of these three, if none of them are making me want to immediately kind of grab it right now and read it, I'll think again, about whether or not they're the right fit for me. Sometimes too, they will go onto my library shelf, which is again, where I, you know, I winnow that book flight down, I return a large amount of those books. And I've went that winnowed amount down goes on to my shelf. And over the course of a week or two weeks, I'll finish a book and then go back and kind of decide which ones of those is of interest to me. There are a lot of times where I will get through that two week period of time, and realize that although I've finished four or five or six books, I've never been, there'll be a book or two that I never quite, I'm getting to the point where I'm wanting to pick up. And we'll just gather those and return it to the library. Because for whatever reason, it just didn't, it just didn't fit the bill for me right now. Again, being very clear with myself and with you guys. That That doesn't mean that those books aren't ones that are going to be perfect for me three weeks from now. They just right, the second were right for me.

Kaytee Cobb 47:10

Perfect. Okay, so let's say it's been a week that you have you finished another book, you go back to your library shelf, you've read 15 to 20 to 50 pages of such and such book, do you reread it if you pick it up? Or do you go in from where you left off?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:26

So usually, I will go in and at least remind myself sort of let myself remember, like, I'll see how much I'm remembering what happened. And if I'm like, Oh, yeah, yeah, I've just picked up, I know exactly where I left off, then I'll just quickly go to that space. And sometimes it might be a book where I'm like, I want to go back and reread it because there's something a little more detailed, or complex, maybe some world building or some character development that I want to really sink into now that I'm kind of committing myself to to the book. In this topic, what I will say is the biggest place where people seem to get stuck is they either think that they must read the books that that have sort of they've they've decided to read right? First of all, that is definitely not true, I want you to release any of the word "should" on this entire process. So just because you went through that initial culling, and you kept a couple books does not mean that you have to read them. It just means they're available to you right then. The other thing is, again, people will say, but, but I want to read all three of them. So what I want to say is don't let that stop you from using the book flight method from choosing your next book. Work to actually listen to your gut and which one is pulling you the most, right? or do something completely silly and just Eeny meeny,

miney moe the crap out of the thing and just start a book. And so what I want to say is we get so like wrapped up in processes and exactly how something has to work. What I love about this whole thing is that it gives me the absolute ability to go with whatever I'm feeling like reading right then. There are no rules in this part of my life, even with the podcast, even with putting stacks on Instagram. If a bunch of people say that they want me to read X or Y in a stack, I still don't let that decide for me, because that doesn't work for my particular reading. But if you guys want to do a book flight and take more books out of the library than normal, and then put a stack on your Instagram and get some feedback, let that be the way that a book flight works for you. So I think what you can do is you can kind of take some of the big parts of this concept and use it in a way that works for you best. That's really, I that's really what I want to encourage everyone to do. For me I love the fact that it lets me really lean into my mood readerness and also it lets bookish serendipity come into play in my life. I want to happen upon books in a way that surprises me. I don't want to only read books that I'm that I'm hearing about from other people, or that I find through all the normal sources, I want to let some book or serendipity happen. So when I let myself just grab books at the library in that way, it opens the door for that book of serendipity. And I really love it.

Kaytee Cobb 50:21

And we love it. We all benefit from it Meredith. So we're very glad that the book flight is what works for you.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 50:27

So Kaytee, do you use book flights to choose your next book?

Kaytee Cobb 50:31

You know, the only time that I think I even get close to your method here is when we have the Indie Press List books, and we have a stack of five and I know I want to pre read at least some of them. And sometimes, or I want to pre read at least some of all of them. And sometimes by the end, I'm like, Oh, yeah. I don't care about any other books that were on my TBR right now, this is the one I'm going to start reading and I let it take me, which I love when that happens.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 50:59

Right. Well, and actually, I'm glad that you said that because that Indie Press List reading that we do for those episodes, because it is always five, maybe six books, that's a perfect example. Like you are doing a book flight in exactly the way that I do it. That's exactly what I do. And you're finding that sometimes there a book or two will really stand out. Anytime you're feeling really like, ooh, but I really just kind of wanted to read this one, even though it doesn't seem like the book I would normally choose. That's the book to choose from your book flight.

Kaytee Cobb 51:30

right, the one that you know, I've put all of them back on the stack, but one of them I tucked next to me on the couch. That's the one I'm gonna read.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 51:37

Yes, yes, the right book will find you if you let it. Alright, Kaytee, so let's talk a little bit about some of those right books. What book are you going to press today?

Kaytee Cobb 51:48

Okay, this is a weird book. Not as weird as the situation we had two weeks ago, but stick with me. Okay, the book I'm gonna press today, it's called Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff, Christ's Childhood Pal by Christopher Moore.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:03

Kaytee, I love this book.

Kaytee Cobb 52:04

You do?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:05

I love it. It's friggin hysterical.

Kaytee Cobb 52:08

It is so funny. Okay, I'm so excited. So I picked this one up, because it's kind of an irreverent retelling, which is what I was talking about a little bit with Norse Mythology as well. So top of mind, I went back to look at my Goodreads. And I read this book well over a decade ago, probably coming up on 15 years now. But guess what? It still makes me laugh when I see the cover all these years later, Christopher Moore is I would say usually known for his paranormal fiction: vampires, death incarnate, you know that kind of thing. This one takes the story of the gospel, yes, the one from Christianity, and turns it on its head. It assumes that Jesus grew up with a bestie named Biff. And I can't even talk about this book without laughing as you can tell. It chronicles the missing years of Christ's life, which are roughly from age 12 to 30. The blurb includes the divinely silly sentence "Verily, the story of Biff has to tell is a miraculous one, filled with remarkable journeys, magic, healings, Kung Fu, corpse re-animations, demons, and hot babes". So you can totally tell from this description if this book is going to be for you or not. You guys, if you are rolling your eyes at me right now, move along. It's okay. Maybe this isn't one to put into your book flight. But if you are looking for a laugh, I have got you covered this week with Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff: Christ's Childhood Pal by Christopher Moore.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:36

I love Like I said, this book. I read it about 15 years ago, and it still makes me laugh. It's actually a book that I liked so much that I still own it. Yeah, this is a great press because I had completely forgotten about bringing it to the show. But it is really it's not for everybody. But if it's for you, it will very much be for you. That's great. All right. Well, I wanted to bring a book that I found purely through bookish serendipity. This this is another book that I was at the library, not looking for middle grade at the time. I literally walked past the shelf, knocked this book accidentally with my bag. And of course, you know, when ever you knock a book down in a bookstore or library, you must buy it or check it out. That's the rule. That's the bookish serendipity rule. So I when in doubt, check it out. This is The Willoughbys by

Lois Lowry and it is one of my favorite books of all time, and I found it purely because I knocked it off the shelf. Okay. Here's the setup. This is middle grade. But also funny so like we're bringing two funny presses. Alright, so the Willoughbys are Timothy, his twin brothers Barnaby A and Barnaby B, And their little sister Jane. They are old fashioned children who adore old fashioned adventures. Unfortunately the Willoughby parents are not very fond of their children, and the truth is that the siblings are not too keen on their parents either. Little do the Willoughby kids know that their neglectful mother and father are hatching an evil plan to get rid of them. Not to worry, these resourceful adventurers have a few plans of their own, but they have no idea what lies ahead in their quest to rid themselves of their ghastly parents and live happily ever after. Oh my gosh, I love this book so much. The parents in this book are so terrible that when they had twins, they couldn't even be bothered to come up with two names. They were like, one name is all we should have to come up with. So they named their twins Barnaby A and Barnaby B because they just couldn't be bothered. That's so funny. So, when I read this book, and I talked about it on the show, I compared it to that absolutely most perfect scone that you that you eat and you love, but you had no idea that what you wanted right now was right then was the scone. Not too sweet. Just exactly right. This book is definitely a satire of classic children's novels. And it's also really a delightful classic children's novel. So it's both at the same time. It's a delight, especially if like me, you love orphan stories. I laughed out loud. So many times I read this in one sitting, Jackson and I read this together, we both really, really loved it. It's exactly the right kind of book to read, to like if one of your kids is home sick for an afternoon, and they really just need comfort, but maybe you're feeling like let's turn off devices for a while. This is a great read aloud for that or like on a rainy afternoon when your plans get canceled. Snuggle up under a blanket with this book and just be prepared to laugh. Lois Lowry, of course will be familiar to you because she is also the author of major award winning book The Giver. But this book is very different than The Giver. It is one of a kind and absolutely worth your time. It is The Willoughbys by Lois Lowry.

Kaytee Cobb 57:11

This book is so fun. My kids and I there's a certain line in it that we quote to each other all the time. They would be like rolling on floor crying laughing as I read it aloud to them. We all just loved it. There is now a sequel The Willoughbys Return. And there's now a Netflix adaptation, which they have watched and I abandoned because I abandoned do not soil the beloved Willoughbys for me Yeah, with this garbage. So

Meredith Monday Schwartz 57:37

yeah, I did yeah, Jackson and I started and we couldn't we couldn't get through it because right I wanted the the bookish experience was just too perfect.

Kaytee Cobb 57:45

Yeah, don't mess with it. Don't mess with it. Stay away.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 57:48

Great. All right. Those were good ones. Good job. Okay, 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 on Instagram.

Kaytee Cobb 58:01

And you can find me Katie and my sexy voice @notesonbookmarks on Instagram.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 58:07

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 on our website at currentlyreadingpodcast.com.

Kaytee Cobb 58:18

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 58:26

And if you really want to help us, you can support us as a patron for \$5 a month. Or you can rate and review us on Apple podcasts or you can shout us out on social media. All of those things make a huge difference toward us finding our perfect audience. Bookish friends are the best friends.

Kaytee Cobb 58:43

All of those things are helping us grow and get closer to our goals. Thanks for doing that guys.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 58:48

Alright, until next week. Happy reading Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 58:50

Happy reading Meredith.