



# Season 4, Episode 32: Swallowing A Tapeworm + Mood Reading Vs. Planned Reading

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**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 books that we've read recently. And you should know, we will not shy away from those strong opinions. So get ready.

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:24

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

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:33

I'm Meredith Monday Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas. And sometimes the best way I can honor a book is to stop reading it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:43

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico and I love that there's always something new to discover at the library. This is episode number 32 of season four, and we are so glad you're here.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:55

That sounds like the perfect beginning to like an after school special case. There's always something to discover at the library. Let's see what Moira and Brad are discovering today.

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:05

Okay, Meredith, I'm excited about your bite sized intro. I'm going to let everybody know right at the top here that today for our deep dive, we're going to talk a little bit about mood reading, because some people are very moody readers, and some people are not. And I think that's interesting to discuss. But before we do that, we will start the way we always do, which is with our bookish moment of the week.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 01:25

So I have a theme in my reading this year. You guys know that I've talked about it. I am trying to read intuitively. Intuitive reading is my theme of the year. Which means I very much need to lean into listening when a book is not working. There's a lot of reasons that might make a book not work. Not

often do I run across the fact that I realized this week that I was reading a book that I was enjoying, but not as much as I could because I was reading it in the wrong format. So I was listening to a book by Elizabeth Haynes, which was recommended by Catherine Ryan Howard when she was on Sarah's Bookshelves Live. It's called Into the Darkest Corner. Irish crime fiction. I'm enjoying it very, very much. I was listening to it on on audio. But what I quickly realized after I listened to for like an hour, and I very quickly realized that the dates of the really short chapters, right, and each chapter starts out with a date. But kind of like Catherine Ryan Howard's work, the construction of this book is really important and the dates mean something to help us solve the mystery. But I was having a really hard time keeping track of it, because I wasn't actually looking at it. So I listened to, I ended up listening to about an hour and a half of it and finally I said to myself, "You know what, I'm stuck buying this book because of this issue, not because it's not good," so I DNF'd it on audio and then I'm going to go ahead and order it from Fabled so that I have it in print. So I definitely think that I want to, I want to read it. And then I started reading a new book called The Harbor by Katrine Engberg, one of my favorite Danish authors, and immediately I just felt myself sink into like, ahh, and that ahh feeling is what I'm chasing all year long because that's intuitive reading. When you have that feeling, you know you've hit the right book. So that's my goal. I want my rating average to be higher, but maybe my number of books lower, because I'm going to be forcing myself to read intuitively. This was just one example of that. That was my bookish moment, Kaytee.

**Kaytee Cobb 03:43**

I like that. And I think that has a little lesson in it for all of us. But I mean, we've talked about DNFing without prejudice many times and sometimes it is just the format that makes all the difference. So yeah.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:54**

Because the narrators were good. The plot is cruising right along. I very much want to know what's happening. But I just knew I wasn't going to be honoring this book by reading it in that format. So again, forcing myself to think I'm feeling that little niggle of barrier to this book. I'm just feeling it a little bit. And I want to get really good at noticing that feeling and doing something about it instead of just pushing past it kind of like when you're intuitively eating. The more you listen to your body say "Hey, you're full," the louder that message gets. I'm trying to do that same thing with my reading.

**Kaytee Cobb 04:28**

I like that. Okay, mine's not nearly as perceptive. I had to go get an oil change this week. I did not get to go get an oil change this week. And I had other errands to run afterwards. But of course, as you know, I like to squeeze in an extra half hour oftentimes, that's just for me on errand running trips. So I made time this time to stop at the library in between the have to dos. I picked up some holds and then I strolled the stacks, which I very rarely get to do. I usually pick up my holds then I go sit on the stairs in the kids section while my kids get to stroll the stacks. And I very rarely venture into the adult section of the library. I'm over in the kid side all the time. Amazingly enough, even though this has been my library for almost three years now, I discovered some new goodies while I was there, and I couldn't wait to share them. First, there's a big sunny atrium on one side of the building at the end of the nonfiction stacks that I had never seen before with like big cushy chairs. It's like it's called like the reading atrium. I was like this exists. What was I had no idea, right? Heaven, right. There's an outdoor patio with a book

stack statue that I had never seen before. I was like, "Look at this beautiful thing. I had no idea this was here." And finally, many other people have this as well. There's a puzzle lending library. So you can choose puzzles, they've all been donated, you just borrow them from off the shelf, return them when you're done, you don't even have to like scan them and check them out. They're just, everybody just drops off puzzles, and then you can use them and bring them back. So I borrowed a big 1000 piece bookish puzzle, and then chose a few of mine to take back in a stack when I return it so that there's even more there to choose from. It was my favorite library trip in a really long time. And I'm not saying things are better without children. But I am saying this true, but

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 06:19

Yeah, many times not all the time. There are things that are better with children. Of course Christmas is one of them. But if

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 06:22

I thought were gonna say Krispy Kreme.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 06:28

Well Krispy Kreme probably also would be better with children. But for sure, sometimes a trip like this, you know, my library recently opened up a Friends of the Library bookstore. They've just done such a good job with because you know sometimes those are like kind of ratty, tatty, you know what I mean? They're kind of like, it's a bunch of books that nobody really wants that like 1974 book on how to play chess. The Lake Travis Library has curated the sh out of this Friends of The Library bookstore. So now every time I go in, I'm like, "Oh, maybe I'll just go in there and just glance around and just see". And so me now I'm getting big library stacks. Now I'm also buying a couple of books. Like I need this like I need a hole in the head. Well, good. Well, I'm glad you got to explore your library. The I think the reading atrium, that's what my personal heaven would be entitled, like when I die and go to heaven. If I've done it right down here. I'm hoping to see the reading atrium.

**Kaytee Cobb** 07:30

Welcome to the reading atrium. Ah, yes, I did it. Right. All right. Well, that was a fun little tangent. Let's talk about some current reads. Meredith, what's your first book this week?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 07:41

That is a really good question, Kaytee. Okay, glad you asked. Yeah, mystery to all of us. It's a mystery until I turn to the proper page in my notes. Here I go. But I've got it now. I am super excited to talk about this book. I read it two months ago, and I have literally thought about it a couple times a week since then. It's very, very much stuck with me. It's a book that completely surprised me that I like it. It's The Guide by Peter Heller. Right. And so Peter Heller wrote The River a few years back, and I've been pretty public about the fact that I read The River and I did not enjoy The River. Because I felt like I wanted to send it down the river. I just felt like it was put forth as being a mystery and then I just felt like not a lot happened. Now that could have been just the reader I was at that time. It could be that it was a very different book than this, but The Guide, Holy Hannah, this book completely surprised me. Let me give you the setup. So our timeline in The Guide is a not too distant future, maybe 10 years from now.

Our setting is Kingfisher Lodge, which is a high end resort destination for the very wealthy. Kingfisher Lodge is nestled in a canyon on a mile and a half of really pristine river water, some of the most pristine river on the planet, and it's known by locals as "Billionaires Mile". Also, Kingfisher Lodge is locked behind a very heavy gate. The resort boasts boutique fishing at its finest. And it hires very experienced guides to lead the tours for these rich folks who want to live their best A River Runs Through It fantasy. And importantly, Kingfisher Lodge is safe from the viruses that have plagued this not too distant future America for the last decade. Our lead character is Jack, a young man who's a little bit lost in his life, but he's a really really good fly fisherman. He's been fishing his whole life. When he's assigned to guide a well known singer, a girl who's come to fish, his only job is to rig her line, carry her gear and steer her to the best trout fishing that they can find. But then, a human scream pierces the night and Jack soon realizes that this idealic fishing lodge may be merely a cover for a more sinister operation. Kaytee, it is a huge shock to me that this ended up being my first five star book of 2022. I loved this book, complete surprise, okay. Like I said, I didn't like The River. When The Guide came out, I sort of rolled my eyes. But then a lot of people who had really loved The River, and there were a ton, it had a really, really a ton of fans started saying they didn't like this one as much. So my anti book twin ears started to perk up. And that's the reason that I got it from the library. So I put it into a little book flight, slotted it in there. And I said to this book, I literally said out loud, "Peter Heller, you have one chapter to woo me."

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 11:01

I'm so glad that he did. I think this book blends very well what Peter Heller is best at: nature writing, and he does that very, very well, and a literary mystery plot. Because both of those things were in this book in spades, you definitely get to enjoy the beautiful sense of place of fishing in the mountains and the rivers of Colorado. It's very, very beautiful in its sense of place. But from the very beginning, unlike The River, this book is filled with plot. It absolutely cracks along the entire way without stopping. So here's my book metaphor for you, because it just came to me and it's absolutely perfect. This book was like that guy. You know, the guy that you meet at a wedding or like bar or whatever, and you're like, he's fine. Okay, but then you get him out on the dance floor, and he's got moves. And you're like, okay, all right. So this is what we're working with here. That was this book for me. I know. Also, I want to say that there are a lot of people who, when I read this book I posted about on Instagram, people were texting me about or DMing me about the the ending. And for me, I really liked the ending, but I could see how it would be controversial. It's not unresolved, so don't worry that it's that. I can't talk about why I liked it and why I thought it was the perfect way for this book to end, but just suffice it to say, there's plenty of action and plenty of nature, natural introspection. Overall, again, my first five star book of 2022. And I'm so glad that I gave Peter Heller some time on my dance card. This is The Guide by Peter Heller.

**Kaytee Cobb** 12:47

Okay, Meredith, I have a question about this because I do often hear these two books kind of referred to in tandem. Is the one a sequel do you have to have read The River?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 12:58

Absolutely not. Very good question. I should have included that in in my my information. You do not at all have to have read The River. There's maybe a paragraph of slight vague mention, but it has

absolutely very little to do with the pot. I'd read *The River* a long time ago and had really no memory of the specifics of the plot and didn't bother me at all. You can absolutely stand alone here.

**Kaytee Cobb** 13:25

Okay. Perfect. Love that. And I love that you made up nature role when we have the word natural in the English language,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 13:33

natural introspection. That's what that's what you get along with, along with like some bug eyed plot things happening. Like, seriously, it's a great book.

**Kaytee Cobb** 13:44

Well, bug eyes also happen in nature. So that works out great, too. Yes, there you go. Okay, my first book this week is kind of a crazy book. It's a little crazy. It's called *Lightseekers* by Femi Kayode. I get the daily deal emails from Audible, right on a regular basis and I don't take advantage of them very often, because I'm like, even for \$3 they're weird. Like, why would I? Whatever.

**Kaytee Cobb** 13:46

They're not, they're not, most of the time, they're not good, though. I'm always like, a lot of times, they're not good with this suggestion,

**Kaytee Cobb** 14:17

Right. So they're just weird. But this one, the cover was interesting enough that I went over to my library, and I was like, "You know what? I'll give it a shot. Let's see what happens here." And I'm glad that that happened with this book. I knew almost nothing about it. So I hit borrow. Our main character is Dr. Philip Taiwo. He is an investigative psychologist, not a detective, who's more interested in solving the why behind a crime rather than solving the crime itself. He's especially interested in crimes that occur in mob situations, like lynchings. So when a powerful Nigerian politician calls him to a small town, he knows that he's there to investigate the Okriri Three, a case that involves the public torture and murder of three university students after what people are calling a simple theft. Why did the mob get so out of control that they would publicly make this like horrible spectacle and, and kill these three young boys? In this case, however, the action is far from over. And there's a vested interest in making sure that the reasoning behind this crime never comes to light. So it starts out a mystery, turns into a thriller. That means that Philip has unseen people actively working against him. Other people end up dead, the thrill starts to amp up, the investigation gets closer to answers. This is a 13 hour audiobook that I listened to in a single day. This is thriller mixed with mystery mixed with almost like an action movie of adventures and car crashes and death threats. There's a lot going on in this book. And at times, I felt like it was too much. Ended up being a four star read for me because it felt like it was so impactful, but it never lagged. There are moments that require attention as a reader. I was tearing out flooring, I talked a little bit about our ongoing house project here, and I would rewind five minutes, and just sit back on my heels and stare at the wall and listen, because I knew that what I had just heard, I really had to go back and pay attention to it. I couldn't be kind of half mast at this one. So as a debut, I think it's pretty impressive to plop someone down in a world they've never been to, give them a crime and

investigation, and then keep them on the edge of their seat the entire time. The only other thing that kept us from being a five star read for me was Philip's marriage, Doctor Taiwo, and the struggles with it that played out behind the scenes of this investigation, it kind of rubbed me the wrong way. I did see one goodreads reviewer who called his depiction of the marriage masochistic because it was so focused on the man and what he was feeling and what he was thinking. And that felt kind of like a piece of a puzzle that was missing to me. So the marriage, just kind of iggy. Otherwise, I really enjoyed it and will be looking for more from this author. It's his debut. Like I mentioned, this one is Lightseekers by Femi Kayode.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 17:12

Interesting. I have not heard of this at all, but it sounds it sounds really interesting. And when you say it's 13 hours, now you listen at 3x right?

**Kaytee Cobb** 17:20

Right.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 17:20

So you did...

**Kaytee Cobb** 17:21

This one had a Nigerian accent, so I was probably listening at two and a half. So I did slow it down.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 17:28

Okay, so when you say that you listen to it in a day, I just want to be sure that there's gonna be a lot of people who are like, Wait, so for 13 straight hours. No, it was really like for seven.

**Kaytee Cobb** 17:38

Right. Yeah, probably five to six.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 17:41

Okay, something like that. Right. Okay, that that makes it makes it make more sense. But interesting. That's a really good one. That's great.

**Kaytee Cobb** 17:48

Yeah, it's an it's got really good reviews too, because it's very propulsive, like you're just on the edge of your seat. It's pretty fantastic.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 17:55

My next book is one that I was really, really excited to read because it is Parasite by Mira Grant. Mira Grant, of course, is the author of our just bookish obsession of 2020, which was Into the Drowning Deep. This is Parasite your setup. This book, just like The Guide is also set in near future. Only this time, instead of things being worse, they are by all accounts better medically. As we start our story, everyone on the planet is in good health, great health. In fact, they owe this great health to of all things.



A parasite, a genetically engineered tapeworm, developed by the pioneering SymboGen Corporation. What could go wrong? So much. When implanted, this parasite, the tapeworm trademarked, this is my favorite part, The Intestinal Body Guard TM, protects them from illness, boosts their immune system and even secretes all the drugs that will keep their bodies feeling fit and energetic. This new discovery has been successful beyond the creator's imagination. It's making just piles and piles of money and now years on like I said, almost every human on the planet has a SymboGen tapeworm living inside of them. I ask you again Kaytee, What could possibly go wrong? So but and you knew there was this coming, these parasites Kaytee are getting restless, as parasites do, they want their own lives and they will do anything.

**Kaytee Cobb** 19:42

Wait, wait a minute. The definition of a parasite Hold on.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 19:47

Yes, the tapeworm. It's a tapeworm that wants its own life and

**Kaytee Cobb** 19:51

and wants to like Netflix and chill?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 19:53

TBR. It wants a TBR and a library card. Okay, it's great. It's tired of being the intestine. bodyguard. Okay,

**Kaytee Cobb** 20:01

I like that we knew that there was a but coming because of course it's an intestinal parasite and butts have to be involved.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 20:08

Exactly. Again, I love Mira Grant I love Into the Drowning Deep. She does a premise, a great premise, right? Premise that you're like, I didn't know I needed a book about an Intestinal Bodyguard. Well, let's hold on for just a second. But Mira Grant, let me remind you is also Seanan McGuire. So the amount of books that this woman is putting out with these, with this amazing creativity, just she is an absolute mark. So there are plenty of things to like in Parasite, again, that premise that just makes you want to find out what does it look like when a tapeworm wants its own life? What could that possibly look like? Also, it has that trope in science fiction that I love, which is humans getting involved in scientific experimentation that is bound to go wrong, and yet they can't seem to stop themselves. Think Jurassic Park, of course, we've got tapeworms instead of dinosaurs, what could go wrong, I just kept saying that to myself the whole time I read the first third of this book. And I will say there are some very tense scenes that had my heart, my little inner tapeworm pounding. There were several characters that I loved a lot. I really, really cared about. But this, here's the big bite here. This book is lengthy. It is maybe 450, 475 pages. And I felt that length the whole way through, I wanted to get really caught up in the story. But the emotional tangents that Mira Grant kept going on that should have developed the characters instead kept taking me out of the story. So what we have here is another book with a great

premise done by a talented author that would have benefited by being 35% shorter. It would have been a really great read overall. By the end, it was fairly easy to see what direction things were going. And so I found myself reading just to confirm my theories. I should also note that this book ends on a cliffhanger which I was fairly aware of going into it because it is a part of a series. And all of that series is out right now. So you could definitely still read on. But I found at the end of it that I just didn't care enough to read on. So I sort of assumed what the resolution was going to be, told myself that I'm right about these kinds of things and just decided to be done with this particular series. So definitely not as big a hit for me as Into the Drowning Deep, but I continue to love Mira Grant and her writing. She's an incredible talent. I will continue to pick up her books and at least give them a try. This is Parasite by Mira Grant.

**Kaytee Cobb** 22:50

I think we can assume that most tapeworms also grow to a length that is unmanageable. So I feel like that's on brand for this book.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 22:57

I mean, again, what could possibly go wrong?

**Kaytee Cobb** 23:01

This jokes just write themselves. This book, so glad you brought it to the show.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 23:07

Yeah, but it wasn't you know, I'm kind of joking about it actually wasn't in its execution, you really do continue to take seriously begin to take seriously what she's talking about that it actually could happen. So that's the thing is, it wasn't a bad book at all. There were several things that I liked about it. I just needed it to be about 30 to 35% shorter, and then I actually think I would have been really recommended.

**Kaytee Cobb** 23:29

Yeah. Yeah, that makes sense. Yeah, excellent. Okay. This is the left turn, which as we knew it had to be right. There's nothing that follows a parasite book about intestinal bodyguards that isn't a left turn. So Exactly, right. I'm going to talk about nonfiction memoir, we're just going to leave the parasites behind.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 23:50

Right. I would have been worried Kaytee, if you'd been like, you know, my next read really nestles in right next to that tapeworm. I would have been worried about your reading.

**Kaytee Cobb** 23:58

Perfect. So this book is called Men We Reaped BY Jesmyn Ward. This is a powerful memoir that, now that I've heard your bookish moment, Meredith, I think will play into what I'm going to say about this. We are following Jesmyn's life forward and backward. And the memoir does this really interesting thing with construction, and we kind of meet in the middle at the end of the book. She lost five men in her life in



five years to various circumstances and different ways of dying. But the one thing these men all had in common was that they were Black. And finding that through line that connects the dots creates a powerful book about the different ways that drugs, accidents, suicide, and poverty, especially affects Black men. In order to bring these men into context in her life, she tells her own life story starting from birth, and then alternates that with chapters about each of the five men and their deaths starting from the most recent one. So we're going back and forth in time, meeting in the center, which is the end of the book, with the first death, that of her brother. I thought this memoir was really powerful and Jesmyn's writing is excellent in every form that I've ever encountered it. Sing Unburied Sing is a tough book but also excellent. It was pressed by Meg Tietz way back on episode nine of season one of the podcast. Salvage the Bones brought me so completely into a hurricane that I felt like I got to experience it through her words. She is a powerful writer. But here in Men We Reaped, the stylistic choice to move through the book ending at the center didn't work for me. I think the goal was to make it feel like a whirlpool, in which the reader gets inevitably sucked down toward the center of the drain. But instead, it felt like a jacuzzi with jets buffeting me from every direction and me unable to tell you which way was up. I'm not saying that I didn't feel deeply love reading this book. Her signature writing style is so evident. Her craft is astonishing. But for this reader, changing the timeline to make it more linear would have served me well. And harkening back to your bookish moment, Meredith, I do wonder if I hadn't had her in my ears, which, of course, is a powerful and wonderful way to experience memoir, and I had been able to look at the dates at the top of each chapter, I would have been able to have a better visual timeline in my head of when things were happening. And instead, I was like, "Wait, what now we're in 1973. What is going on right now," you know? Like, it just felt too scattered for me to really take it in this way. So that was Men We Reaped by Jesmyn Ward.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 26:32**

Interestingly, in my nonfiction, I do feel like I vastly prefer a linear timeline. In my fiction, I'm kind of more okay with it. It can go really wrong still in fiction, but in nonfiction, I can think of several books that I felt like I liked a lot about that book but I wish that it instead of kind of jumping back and forth and maybe being thematically organized or organized in a different way, I wish it would have been more linear. And then I could have just part of my brain, I think could have switched off so that I can enjoy the story more.

**Kaytee Cobb 27:06**

Yeah, I think so too. For me, as a reader, it's easier to connect those dots. If I'm like, "Oh, well, this had already happened at that point. So of course, she was feeling such and such, by the way that this played out". Whereas jumping around, you're like, well, but when did this happen with relation to that other event? Is one informing the other or not? So that's why yeah, it was, it was great. It was well written. It just was difficult to take in, in the format that I chose.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 27:33**

Yeah, yeah. Okay, so Kaytre, I want for my third book, I want to talk about a book that I have been so excited to just finally get to talk about publicly because I have so many words to say about this book. I want to talk about Piranesi by Susanna Clarke.

**Kaytee Cobb 27:49**

You haven't done this one yet? No, no, it was the book that surprised you?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 27:54**

We talked about it there. Okay, I said that I was gonna that I was gonna give it a whole treatment because I gave it just a really small treatment. We also talked about it a little bit on that COVIDeo when I was actually reading it. Have you read it yet?

**Kaytee Cobb 28:06**

I did. I did read it. I buddy read it, which is the way to go, I think.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:11**

Okay. Yes, for sure. And I buddy read this and I'll talk a little bit about that. Here's the setup for Piranesi. Stick with me. All right, keep your, I want everyone to just like open up their brain and just stick with me for a little bit because this is the start out in a way that you're not expecting. We're going to land this plane. Okay. The setting for our book is the house where our lead character, Piranesi lives and this is no ordinary house. It has an infinite number of rooms and an endless number of corridors and halls. The walls are lined with thousands of statues, some small and some multiple stories high. The house is so large in fact that it has its own tides, and an ocean and waves that crashed through the corridors and up the staircases. It has floods that can be fatal if you're not ready for them. It has birds that fly and clouds that float through the places where the ceiling above has collapsed. But Piranesi our lead character knows this house intimately and knows how to survive in it. And he loves this house and it provides for him in every way he needs providing for. His one goal in life is to fully explore and map this world that he lives in. There is one other person in this house. It's a person that Piranesi calls "The Other" and together they are working on a vast and unnamed project. As the story develops, Piranesi a happy and endlessly curious man begins to discover things that suggest that his house and his world may not be all that they seem. So this is where we start, but don't get it wrong. This is not all the book is. Okay. So I picked this book up because Roxana, my reading partner, we talk, we leave each other voicemail messages, we talk about all the books that we're reading, right. And so she was reading this one with her book club. She never was going to pick it up on her own. But she picked it up because her book club chose it. So the first couple chapters, she's leaving me messages telling me how like, Oh, this is, you know, this is, this is strange, but I'm also strangely fascinated when she gets a couple chapters in and the messages start to me start to change. Like, "Meredith I think I need you to read this book." And I'm like, okay, and then a little bit later, it's, "I need you to get this book today." And I'm like, oh, oh, okay. Well, this is a book that I've never been interested in, except, like, won a bunch of awards and felt very, you know, like high literary right? Plus, I had no idea it was about and what she was talking about just felt very, very weird to me. So, here's the thing. I'm so glad that I listened to her because this book is now on my list of favorite books of all time. It is a masterpiece. It is so so good. And I want to say first and foremost that it is billed as literary fantasy. And it is not. Let me say again, for the people in the back. This is not literary fantasy. I feel so mad Kaytee, just like I did about A Gentleman in Moscow being identified as being slow and prosaic and character driven. Why are these people trying to hide all the good books from us, Kaytee. I don't understand selfish, they're selfish.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 31:39**

Because Piranesi is, in some ways, the most mysterious mystery novel that I have read in a really, really long time. That's what it is. It's a mystery. It reminds me in some ways, the kind of puts you off balance from the beginning way of The Devotion of Suspect X. And it had some of the vibes of Seanan McGuire's Every Heart a Doorway to if you've read that book, and you read Piranesi, you'll know why I'm saying that. When I started making notes on my reading experience, I really could only come up with one word phrases. So my notes look like this to start. Bonkers. Weird, bizarre, inscrutable, and then they start to change. Beautiful, melodic, windy, gorgeous. This book felt like sitting in the prow of a boat sailing into God knows what with a huge smile on your face. That's what the whole thing feels like. I never knew where it was going, especially in the first third, especially in the first half, really, you're knocked off balance over and over again. And yet I never wavered in my desire to find out what the heck was happening in this world. I think you just instinctively trust Susanna Clarke, because she's so good. You trust that she's going to be taking you someplace worthwhile. She gives you breadcrumbs. Starting in the second chapter that if you're paying attention, really let you know that you are in for a fascinating mystery. I kept finding myself saying Wait, what? And then the second half just completely flies. Until the ending, which is absolute perfection. It does resolve and I think it's important for people to know that you are going to figure out what's happening, right? This book is singular in every way, I have never read a book like it. And it reminded me how very enlightening and just plain surprising reading can be. Here are some tips that I want to give you if you find yourself maybe being interested. You might not and Kaytee, you might disagree with me on this. But I think you might not want to do this one on audio, I think the journal entry, you did okay. The journal entry titles I think would be really irritating on audio. And also, I found myself wanting to flip back and forth to things to refer and double check my memory. Also, it takes roughly 50 pages, which is about 15 to 20% of this slim book, to even remotely have your feet under you. So go into it knowing that you're supposed to feel off balance for a bit, try to lean into that rather than fighting it. Now, all of that being said, I really want to say if you read the first three chapters, and you hate it, or you're feeling very irritated, please set it down. Please don't force this book. There is no gain for anyone. If you get to that point and you're really not enjoying it, you're not wanting to find out what's going to happen, don't force it. Don't put on Facebook that you tried it and didn't like it. Just set it down and say it just wasn't for me right now and maybe never will be. I have no idea. So here's to books that completely and absolutely surprise you and change you and make you want to shout about them from the rooftops. This was that kind of book for me. One of the best mysteries I've ever read is Piranesi by Susanna Clarke.

**Kaytee Cobb 35:14**

Well, I'll add to your bossiness that a buddy is a fantastic way to take this in, like we said at the top that being able to bounce theories off of each other, and wonder aloud together, what is happening. That's why Roxanna wanted you to pick it up, right? She wanted somebody to process in real time with her. Right? What is going on this book,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 35:35**

right? And so many people picked it up that after I posted about it that that first time and they were DMing me and being like, okay, you don't need to respond to me. Here's my current theory, and hearing everybody's theories as they were reading it. And of course I didn't I would just like respond with that

like straight line emoji or the like, or the emoji at but it but yes, I do agree that this is one that if you can buddy read it, it is a great experience. Because again, it's really a very slim novel. It's a very fast read. It's not going to take a bunch of your time. And it's good to be on that boat into the unknown with somebody else. You can kind of hold hands.

**Kaytee Cobb 36:14**

Right? Yes, a skipper to your first mate right? Yes. Yes. Love that. Oh, I'm so glad that you brought that one today. Okay, my third book this week, is called Don't Cry for Me by Daniel Black. This is the book that I read immediately prior to Lightseekers during the same tear out flooring project. And it also left me staring at the wall in a stupor in the same way that that one did, but for different reasons. Jacob our main character is on his deathbed and writing to his son Isaac, who he is estranged from. They haven't met or spoken in many years. And Jacob wants him to understand his father, even though they probably will not speak again before he passes. So he writes some letters. This is an epistolary novel. In each chapter, Jacob tells us the current date, and then recounts his own inch closer to death, and then brings us back in time to his own childhood and upbringing. So it's like a little check in December 25 of 2006, and then going back 30, 40, 50 years. All of the childhood upbringing goes in sequential time order. And if you're wondering, this does not get confusing. We're not jumping back and forth between multiple decades. His history informs, their history informs Jacob and Isaac's relationship together, as he recounts a lifetime of trauma and difficulty and the ways that that impacted their relationship, especially when Isaac came out as gay. The novel was made even more powerful by the foreword from the author explaining that his own father had entered the evening of his life, and some of the ways that they had interacted throughout the years. This isn't memoir. Daniel, the author is not Isaac and his father is not Jacob, but it feels so deeply personal and intimate to read this story after that prologue. This novel was like a less violent version with no brain matter of Razorblade Tears by SA Cosby. It also reminded me of the same vibes as Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates. And finally, I got vibes of Gilead by Marilynne Robinson. I called it "Gilead but more interesting" in my Goodreads review, because it really made me want to fall asleep at the wheel. If any of those books was a win for you, I think this is a good one to pick up next. I was shocked to find it in my library's hoopla collection available to listen to immediately, just a few days after it was announced as a February Book of the Month Club pick, I snagged it right away and I was like, "Wait, people are paying \$18 for this book. And here it is for free right here for me." It was like magic treasure waiting for me at the bottom of the pile. Yes. I loved it. It is it is powerful and moving. It is a family story. It is history gently woven in. It's a Black family that loves each other deeply and also has a hard time loving each other. It's so beautifully done. It's Don't cry For Me by Daniel Black.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:16**

That sounds so so good. And I don't even remember it being on the Book of the Month list of possibles. But now that you're describing it, it sounds really good.

**Kaytee Cobb 39:28**

It's really good. All right, those were our six current reads. We played in all the pools today. I feel like and I think that talks a lot about the fact that we both like to play in all the pools. So now we're going to talk about mood reading, because sometimes that means that you want to read about intestinal

parasites and sometimes it means you want a huge house that has its own tides and those things can exist in the same person. So how do you know where to go as a mood reader and I wanted to talk to you specifically about this, Meredith, or I wanted somebody to talk to me about it. Because of the four of us so far, I am the only one that doesn't count myself as a mood reader. You and Mindy and Mary all say, "Yeah, I really like to, you know, let my moods guide me," and, and I'm like, you know, I really like to make a TBR I like to stick with it.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 40:21

So, this is a really interesting thing for us to be talking about on a couple of levels. But I guess, Kaytee, even for all of these years of us talking about reading in such detail, I guess I would have thought I know that you do compile lists, and you sort of have a sense of like your next up TBR, you know, that kind of thing, your near term TBR. But I guess I would have also said like finger gun to my head that yes, Kaytee would describe herself as a mood reader. So how exactly I can't almost four years in, I can't believe I'm asking you this question. How exactly do you choose when you get done with a book? How do you choose your next one?

**Kaytee Cobb** 41:01

I just pick up the next book.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 41:06

Like, the next book on your piano? Like literally like the next, like you have a pile that you've created? So walk me through what I don't understand.

**Kaytee Cobb** 41:14

Offentimes, yes, I do have at the beginning of the month, I will pull some books off my shelves and say, you know, this month, I really want to focus on let's say, it's June, it's Pride Month, I really want to make sure that I'm pulling some LGBT authors, and making sure I'm getting stories that are nonfiction and fiction and everything in between that have LGBT representation. And I make that stack or I read it out on my phone. And then I just start reading through the stack and it doesn't. And I'm not sitting there every time and wondering, okay, well, now that I finished, Don't Cry for Me, which was, which was, you know, poignant and family oriented. Now, I really am in the mood for something different.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 41:56

So are you saying when you put the book, when you put the pile or the list together, you're you're not even concerned about the order? Like, how do you make that order.

**Kaytee Cobb** 42:07

Now I'm not concerned about the order. A lot of times, it's mostly which one I can get next on audio, if I'm going to pick it up on audio because we did talk about this in the bookish friends group a little bit this week that sometimes it's easier for me, a lot of people know this already to read on audio to listen on audio. So even if I have the physical book in my house, if I can get one of them on audio sooner, that'll be my next read. Because that's the slot I need to fill is my audio book reading.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 42:36

I would rather swallow a tapeworm than read this way Kaytee. I feel like I feel like it's that Tom Cruise moment in Mission Impossible where you ripped off your face? I don't even know you anymore. I don't even know how anyone could actually read the like. I mean,

**Kaytee Cobb** 42:55

You guys Meredith thought this wasn't gonna be an interesting conversation.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 43:00

Yeah, it was kind of like, "I don't know about this deep dive Kaytee. It seems a little boring." Like, you know... Wait, so I just don't understand

**Kaytee Cobb** 43:09

I have questions for you. Because I do. I just pick the next one and I try it out. And sometimes it doesn't work for me for any number of reasons. But I'm not sitting there like trying to feel out, you know, my, my intuitive mood about what needs to happen next. So for me, when you're like, Well, you know, I do my book fight. And I'm a mood reader. I'm like, But what? How do you even choose which of those but like, how do you know which one's going to match your mood? And this is very confusing to me. I don't understand how mood reading works at all.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 43:46

Okay, so the fact that was part of what I was going to tell you about this conversation is about this topic is that I literally sometimes, because I'm trying so hard to be intuitive and really listen. Because what a lot of mood reading looks like is kind of like, I don't know what I'm really in the mood for. Let me kind of pick up and put down and pick up put down, which is a perfectly fine way to decide your mood. Like, that's perfectly fine. Book flights are sort of that, but not really. So let's divide this into two. One is if I sit down and do a book flight, sometimes that will that will immediately lead to my next book, because there will be something that's so completely wrapped me in that I'm like, Oh, this is for sure what I'm in the mood for I feel that click that feeling right and then I know immediately, but sometimes I know that that's not going to be the case and I really need I literally need to take a moment and I need to lay down a lot of times this is what I do is I go to sleep at night. Like I'm laying down. I'll turn off the lights. I'll get Johnny settled and off me and then I'll be like okay, I need to think and I will literally be like, What am I? What book do I want? This is like a positive like I enjoy this process.

**Kaytee Cobb** 45:07

Like a Ouija board?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 45:08

No, no, not like asking it to guide me. But because I'm putting my fingers up like I'm meditating, no, I'm laying in bed. And I'm literally thinking to myself, like I'm burrowing deep inside myself and thinking, what is calling to me? What do I feel like reading because as soon as I wake up in the morning, now



look at the look on your face, looking at me in the exact same way. When I wake up in the morning, I want to be ready to pick up that book. So as I go to sleep, I'll be thinking, Okay, what what books have I read in the past that are kind of like giving me these feelings. I'm kind of calling back my reading in the past. And I'm like, and so oftentimes what that looks like is something very opposite from what I just finished. So if there's any pattern to my reading, and I've heard a lot of mood readers say the same thing, although it's not gonna be true for everyone. It's definitely what is I want to ping pong. Okay, so when I got done with, you know, Piranesi, I really wanted something that was very straightforward and prosaic and very like, okay, everything in this book makes complete sense, because I had just read this other book where I had to really find my footing. Or if I read a really, really intense mystery or thriller with like, a lot of blood and gore, the next thing I'll read will probably be middle grade, or a fairytale retelling. And I'll just ping pong back and forth like that. That's usually I almost never want to read something back to back, which is why I'm asking you. So you finished Don't Cry for Me? What if the next book on your list or that comes in is something super similar?

**Kaytee Cobb** 46:54

Well, okay, so I don't, I don't Ouija board my dreams into...

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 47:00

I don't Ouija board it either.

**Kaytee Cobb** 47:02

That's what's in my head right now. But all I'm ever trying to do is avoid a rut. So if I'm like, Okay, I just finished a middle grade, somebody got to die in the next one. I don't care what book it is. I don't need it to be a dark, or a literary mystery, or I don't care if it's a thriller. I'm just like, wow, that was sweet. Now let's try something new. So I'll look at the stack. And I'll say, that was middle grade. Just anything that's not middle grade is next. But it doesn't matter to me. Okay, there's not a perfect fit in there for me. It's just not middle grade.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 47:36

Right. And that is really what I struggle with is this that every single time I feel like, what is the next perfect like that that's the struggle for me, is that I'm looking for that perfect thing.

**Kaytee Cobb** 47:49

Right? It sounds exhausting.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 47:52

Well, I mean, I think it requires a lot of intention. So some of the things that I do to enable this chaotic way of choosing my books, is I have a lot of books around me all the time. So when someone says like sometimes someone will mentioned I think Anne Bogle mentions early on in her podcast talking to someone who's like, "I just have one book in my house. That's a book I'm reading when I'm done, I'll donate it and I'll go buy another book," and I about broke into hives. Yeah, I was like, I am so glad that that works for you. I would rather swallow a tapeworm, so I just can't, I can't understand anything other than having a ton of books around me to choose from. Because I just don't know exactly what's going



to be calling to me. So when I get my book stacks from the library, they are almost always like Johnny just picked up a stack today. And he was like, "This stack has like this weird ogre middle grade thing and like clearly what's a what's a you know, serial killer book. And then it's got, you know, what is this is this nonfiction about Leonardo da Vinci?" He's like, "This book is like, makes no sense. The stack makes no sense". And I'm like, "That's because I contain multitudes. And I never know which multitude is going to come to the top."

**Kaytee Cobb** 49:12

And mine. All my multitudes are at the top. Just whichever one was there last, it gets shoved down a little bit, but all the other multitudes are up there at the top.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 49:21

Okay, that's very interesting.

**Kaytee Cobb** 49:24

Okay, but I do like I don't mood read, but I do like it. We've touched sometimes about seasonal reading. And we have, you know, we've talked about spreadsheets today already. But on my TBR spreadsheet, I just recently added a column that says, month or season, and I can put in, I want to read The View was Exhausting in the summertime. And I want to read Plain Bad Heroines in the fall. And I want to read A Tale for the Time Being in a AAPI Heritage Month, which is May so I can put in a month or a season, but it's very, it's very structured. It's a spreadsheet, you know? So, and I'll just get it done whether or not I felt like a book about, I think it's suicide for A Tale for the Time Being. I think that's the main driving plot point there. It'll fit in there somewhere. And that's fine. I don't have to be in the mood for to killing myself. Right? A character killing itself. Right.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 50:22

And so yes, and that totally makes sense to me that way of kind of narrowing down a little bit what you will feel appropriate at that particular time. My shelves, especially now that I have my library and so I've been able to expand much, much further in my organization, I have it organized by genre. And then author, of course, within genre, but also, I have some shelves that are for seasonal readings, so and those will cross genre. So for someone else that might not make sense, like, "Well, wait, why do you have all this young adult fantasy over here? But then there's this one young adult fantasy that's sitting over here on your winter shelf? And I don't understand." Exactly. And so I do, I do have that. And so a lot of times what it looks like is me, laying down and thinking, what is the right book for me right now and then getting up and walking to whatever shelf feels like it's calling to me? And kind of like I will physically, I will physically put my finger along the spine like I'm maybe there is something about this process. Don't say that, again. It's not that I grew up in an evangelical household, I'm very triggered by their satanic sorry, I don't, I can't, we don't we don't call any of that. But

**Kaytee Cobb** 51:48

okay, maybe the Spirit is guiding you there is something

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 51:51

energetic that is happening that is like, I need to I need to feel drawn to it. And oftentimes, again, even with all of this process, even then will have times where I'm like, "Okay, I kind of thought I was in the mood for this. But it turns out this particular one is not exactly the right fit." So then I kind of need to, I need to rethink. So I wonder if for a lot of mood readers, as opposed to like, I wonder which camp of this two camps that were that we're talking about? I wonder which would rate their reading experiences kind of higher, like more satisfactory, right. And I also wonder which one

**Kaytee Cobb** 52:33

DNF more often

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 52:34

gets through more books? Yeah. So like, our mood readers, they're really paying attention to their mood. So they're reading books that end up being a better fit for them. So our ratings higher, whereas you're kind of just pulling from a stack and hoping for the best even though you yourself have curated that stack?

**Kaytee Cobb** 52:53

Right, right. Yeah, I'm not, I'm not blindly strolling the library and just pulling something off the shelf. It's my own stack. But yeah, I do wonder about both of those things. Who's more likely to DNF, who's more likely to rate their reads higher? And are most readers one way or the other? You know, overall, of this small population of Currently Reading posts, most of you are mood readers. Right? We count yourselves as mood readers. So then, is that is that typical for the reading world in general? I'm interested in that as well.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 53:28

Well, we definitely will put up a poll about this, because I would love to know, Are you a planner reader? Or are you a mood reader? And I would, I would love to get a sense of that. Because this is really, really interesting to me.

**Kaytee Cobb** 53:43

The way to find out is which one of us made you raise your eyebrows bigger and drop your mouth.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 53:50

Right where you're like, I just don't understand what you're saying. Whatever you are, you're the opposite of that. Yeah, exactly.

**Kaytee Cobb** 53:55

Exactly. I love that. We solved it today Meredith.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 53:59

We solved it. I do think it's important for each person to know, for every reader to know, because it goes back into that reader know thyself, like your reading profile, the more we know ourselves as readers,

the more we can do the things and employ the strategies that enable us to be the best satisfied readers. Yeah, satisfied readers, readers that feel really satisfied by our reading life. So I think it's an important topic, and I would again, I'm very fascinated to see the percentages in this poll. We'll put that up for sure.

**Kaytee Cobb** 54:31

All right, sounds good. Let's land this plane. Let's press some books into people's hands. What have you got for us this week?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 54:38

Okay. I wanted to bring a book that I actually talked about in the very first episode more than a year ago of All Things Murderful and it was a book that I read a really, really long time ago. I actually read it in June of 2012. But it stuck with me because it is a book that surprised me. A book that I thought it was one thing and it ended up being something completely different. This is *The Uninvited Guests* by Sadie Jones. Let me give you the setup. One late spring evening in 1912 in the kitchens at Stern, which is British manor house, preparations begin for an elegant supper party in honor of Emerald Torrington who is celebrating her 20th birthday. But only a few miles away, a horrible train accident propels a crowd of mysterious and not altogether savory survivors of said train accident to seek shelter at the manor and the household is thrown into confusion and mischief. The cook toils over mock turtle soup and the chocolate cake covered with green sugar roses, which the hungry band of visitors is not invited to taste, but nothing it seems will go according to plan once these people arrive. As the passengers wearily search for rest, the house undergoes a strange transformation. One of their number, who is definitely not a gentleman, makes it his business to join the birthday celebration, uninvited. And then the evening turns to stormy night, and a most unpleasant parlor game threatens to upend the entire evening. Kaytee, here's what I said about this: "Come for the manor house, stay for the creep factor". This book is so creepy. And it is a really, really surprising read. This one completely took me by surprise. It started out as an English, sort of English manor house comedy of manners and then it gets so dark, so brutal, so twisty. Even after reading the Amazon reviews, which are really way too low, in my opinion, that was true back then, and it's still true now, I didn't see this book coming. There are great characters with a sinister, sexy narrator. And I loved it. So if you want to book that is going to surprise you, I want to press *The Uninvited Guests* by Sadie Jones.

**Kaytee Cobb** 57:11

I remember reading that book because of I think the very first time you talked about on the show, because it's been years now. And there's a scene that of course, I'm not gonna spoil for anyone that I still think about whether like that was just like, "What the heck is happening right now?", And I still think about it all these years later. So I love it. Yeah.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 57:32

I love it in this day and age. It's it's great when a book can surprise us.

**Kaytee Cobb** 57:35

Yes, I agree. I agree. And that one is surprising. The one I'm going to talk about is also one that stuck in my head quite a bit. It's Vox by Christina Dalcher.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 57:48

No, yeah. Oh my gosh.

**Kaytee Cobb** 57:50

All right. It's been three years since I read this book. And at least once a week, but probably closer to everyday I think about this book. This is like a one night stand book that we talked about a couple episodes ago, and that it will grab you by the throat throw you against the wall, and it won't let you go until it's done with you. Here's what I said when I reviewed it three years ago. "Goodness, this book is terrifying." In a dystopian post Obama America, the president who takes the reigns is a fundamentalist Christian, who espouses the idea that women were made to serve men under advisement from his pastor, he institutes bracelets that count a woman's words and deliver a shock if she goes over 100 in a given day. The premise is horrifying, if far fetched, and it just gets worse as it develops. Especially awful in bringing this novel to life, when my Fitbit would vibrate with reminders to move as I read, because I couldn't put it down. So I was just sitting still on the couch. Still, three years later, when my Fitbit vibrates unexpectedly, especially while we are recording Meredith and I've been sitting still, but talking a lot, it makes me think that maybe I'm about to get a shock. This book felt totally within the realm of possibility and also completely horrifyingly, please don't ever let this happen. I loved it. I could not put it down and it scared the bejesus out of me in the calmest way possible. It's not calm. It's not calm at all. My heart rate was pounding throughout this entire book. It's Vox by Christina Dalcher.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 59:23

That book deserves a reread. It really deserves a group reread, because I think the last three years have not been kind to this premise. And, man, it is, yeah, there's some scenes early on as the mother of boys that like introduces even more of an element where you're like, like, what if you lived in a world that wasn't like this and then was like this and how does it affect your husband and your son? Right, that book is bananas and really very memorable. Very, very well done. absolutely terrifying.

**Kaytee Cobb** 59:59

Totally. Yeah, I agree.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 1:00:01

All right, good books this week Kaytee. All right. 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** 1:00:12

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

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 1:00:17

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](http://currentlyreadingpodcast.com).

**Kaytee Cobb** 1:00:27

You can also follow the show at [@currentlyreadingpodcast](https://www.instagram.com/currentlyreadingpodcast) on Instagram, or email us at [currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com](mailto:currentlyreadingpodcast@gmail.com).

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 1:00:33

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**Kaytee Cobb** 1:00:50

Bookish friends are the best friends. Thank you all for helping us grow and get closer to our goals.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 1:00:55

Alright, until next week, may your coffee be hot

**Kaytee Cobb** 1:00:57

and your book be unputdownable.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 1:00:59

Happy reading Kaytee.

**Kaytee Cobb** 1:01:01

Happy reading Meredith.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 1:01:03

I almost said earlier "follow me for more tapeworm related books."