



Season 4, Episode 38: Curating Our Shelves + Reading During a Big Switch-Up

Mon, 5/9 • 52:35

Kaytee Cobb 00:10

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

Mary Heim 00:22

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

Kaytee Cobb 00:33

I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico, and I've been stalking my shelves with cheap books.

Mary Heim 00:40

And I'm Mary Heim, a working mom of one and I am counting down the days until it is hammock reading season. This is episode number 38 of season four and we are so glad you're here.

Kaytee Cobb 00:50

So glad you're here. So happy to have you here today Mary. It's been a while since we got to record together.

Mary Heim 00:56

It has been. I'm so excited to be here today. Choosing my books for this episode was like an embarrassment of riches, riches, being able to choose from so many of my recent reads. So I'm excited to talk to you about them today Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 01:08

I'm excited too. I wanted to let everybody know right here at the top that today our deep dive is about how our reading changes during short term times of change. Like what happens when we know we have a short thing going on that messes with our reading in some way. So I'm excited to get into that a little bit, Mary, but first, we're gonna get started the way we always do, which was with our bookish moments of the week, what do you got for us?

Mary Heim 01:32

Well, Kaytee, my bookish moment of the week is very fresh this week. I recently had the idea to gather some friends together on a video call to paint our nails together and talk books. I'm sure this is of no surprise to anybody who follows me on Instagram. And I got together with my friend Amy of @what_Amy_reads on Instagram to co-host it with me. And last night, we had our first official Polish and Prose, which is what we're calling it. And it was so much fun. Rather than everybody reading the same book, we each chose a book within this category of "a book that brought you joy lately", so very wide open to interpretation. And everybody just shared for a few minutes about their books, most of us painted our nails, and we spent an hour plus just talking and laughing, sharing spicy book opinions and getting to know each other. And it was just everything my heart needed. Most of us agreed that life just still kind of feels heavy right now and always. And it's still just really hard to connect with books and that capture our attention. So hearing what everybody had read and really, really loved not only stocked my TBR, but also just felt like such a special little pocket of the week taken just to connect and have fun and build this little community. I had such a blast, I already can't wait to do it again. It was easily my bookish moment of a week, if not my bookish moment of the month, maybe my entire year. It was so much fun.

Kaytee Cobb 03:00

I'm so glad that this timing worked out so perfectly, because I had seen your stories about it, of course. And I was so excited to get to hear about it. And now you brought it as a bookish moment, which means I get to ask all the questions. So are you going to do this on a regular schedule or just whenever you feel like it?

Mary Heim 03:02

We are going to do this on a regular schedule. We are already planning for next month. I don't want to get too ahead of ourselves, and be like "We're gonna do this once a month forever and ever." But right now, we're planning on doing it again in May, the topic this next coming month, I think, is going to be "your desert island book". So I'm very excited to hear what everybody has to say for that and it is open to anybody who wants to join it. You do not have to have come to the first one. You don't frankly even need to paint your nails if you just need some time to connect with some people and have like a quick everybody just talked for a couple minutes. But then we were all very chatty in the chat, of our thoughts on the books that other people brought. And it was really great if you're like, wanting to connect with folks, but maybe not ready to, you know, deep dive into two hours on zoom with strangers like it was not like that at all. It was very low stakes, high reward. Super fun.

Kaytee Cobb 04:11

Okay, so then you kind of answered my next question, which is you still have space for additional people to join you. And my final question now is how do you type in the chat when you've just painted your nails? Because this would be a problem for me.

Mary Heim 04:24

That is a really good question I did last night a couple of times be like "Oh, that that hasn't dried yet. I better not". But I don't think anybody had a big problem with it. It wasn't prohibitive. Let's just say that.

Kaytee Cobb 04:36

Okay, okay, well, that sounds lovely. And as always, y'all can find Mary at @Maryreadsandsips on Instagram. Go connect with her and then she'll get you all set up to join Polish and Prose. That sounds so fun, Mary.

Mary Heim 04:48

It was so fun. It was so much fun. I loved it. Kaytee, what was your bookish moment this week?

Kaytee Cobb 04:53

Okay, my bookish moment has been kind of ongoing. A few weeks ago, I talked about my new bookshelves and the internet was as excited as I am about them, which made me so happy. As I've organized each like section, collection, and I really have the space to see what I have, I've also become aware that there are some forever favorites missing that I'm sad about. A lot of times this happens because I loved an author after reading a book from the library or an audio, so I ended up buying a later book from them. But my favorite title is still not on my shelf. For example, a few days ago, I noticed that I have *The Passengers* by John Mars, but *The One* which is my favorite by him, was not on my shelves. So as I note these little spots that are lacking, I make a note in my phone. And once I get to three or four books, I usually jump over to [thriftbooks.com](https://www.thriftbooks.com) to see if they have what I need. Santa Fe is not a big city. And we really only have two thrift stores in town, only one of which has any kind of decent book selection. We also have one used bookstore that's kind of like a creepy Easter egg hunt. Like there's like so many stacks and it like smells a little bit moldy in there. It's lovely to go in there, but you're not gonna like find exactly what you need. And so I use [thriftbooks](https://www.thriftbooks.com) because it's like shopping at a thrift store, it's [thrift stores](https://www.thriftbooks.com) prices, except they almost always have not only the title, but the cover that I want, which when I'm picking stuff for my forever shelves is very important to me, usually for five bucks or less. And you get reading rewards points that accrue so quickly that I get free books pretty frequently. And I love that as well. This is not an ad. This is just "Kaytee, how did you get so many gorgeous books on your shelves?" And the answer is I did not spend a bank doing that. I use [thriftbooks](https://www.thriftbooks.com). And they bring me joy.

Mary Heim 06:41

Hi love me a [thriftbooks](https://www.thriftbooks.com) haul and that \$10 minimum for free shipping is chef's kiss so good. I love that.

Kaytee Cobb 06:50

and getting those little green and white packages in the mail. I'm always like, "Oh, what did I order?" because it takes you know, two weeks to get there.

Mary Heim 06:57

It's like buying yourself a present. I love it.

Kaytee Cobb 07:00

Its future Kaytee gets a present from [thriftbooks](https://www.thriftbooks.com). Okay, yeah, those were fun, bookish moments. Let's get into current reads. Mary, what do you have for us?

Mary Heim 07:08

Okay, well, Kaytee, there has got to be some sort of bookish serendipity going on today that you just brought up *The One* by John Marrs, because I have got a little bit of a tie in to this book and my first read and I'm really I was really excited to talk to you in particular about it today because this book made me think of you and made me think of *The One*. So alright,

Kaytee Cobb 07:28

Ooh, I'm excited.

Mary Heim 07:29

This first book I've got today is called *The Arc* by Tori Henwood Hoen. All right, so Ursula Byrne is our protagonist. She is a successful kind of mid 30s exec for a bland bougie startup company in New York City. She has done all of the dating apps. She's got her life in order, but she cannot seem to find her person. She stumbles across this bespoke super secret elite dating service that claims to match you with your lifelong, perfectly compatible match, your soulmate level match. They do so via this complex and proprietary, if not a little ethically questionable set of assessments and data technology. Through this service, Ursula meets Raphael, a 40 something lawyer who seems so good she almost can't believe he wasn't like crafted from scratch just for her right? So this pair sets off on their relationship, but things begin to unfold in unanticipated ways. Some shocking information is revealed and they learn that even true love cannot always be engineered. So, there's our setup, Kaytee. So I am so excited when you said *The One*. I was like, "What are the chances?" As I was reading this, I kept thinking, if you took the thriller elements out of *The One*, but kept all of this suspense, and added some like Zeitgeisty, millennial humor, that is this book. That is *The Arc*. I flew through this one and found it really compulsively readable. It is not a romance. It's not a rom com. It's not a thriller, but it does have elements of all of those kind of wrapped up in this really readable contemporary fiction package. You might not like the characters in this one or agree with their choices. But I almost didn't even care about that because it was just that much fun to zip through. I think this one would be an excellent slump buster, a really great beach or plane read, just a great book about relationships that isn't necessarily romance for those who might stay away from the genre and really fun and unusual, and I think just different from some of what I've been reading or seeing on shelves lately. And I just I really enjoyed it. That one is *The Arc* by Tori Henwood Hoen.

Kaytee Cobb 09:46

Okay, I do have to ask... this sounds right up my alley. I'm very excited to get my hands on it. Is there, because Meredith and I both care about this a lot, any kind of adultery storyline in here?

Kaytee Cobb 09:58

Let me, it's been a little while since I've read this one. No, I don't believe that there is. It does not veer into that territory. These two are both actively single seeking a mate. There is not adultery.

Kaytee Cobb 10:14

Yes. Love that. Okay, well then I'm putting it on the list for sure. I'm very excited about that.

Mary Heim 10:20

I can't wait to hear what you think. I think you're really gonna like it.

Kaytee Cobb 10:23

I have a YA fantasy for my first pick here. Mary, I want to tell you about *The Lost Dreamer* by Lizz Huerta. This is YA fantasy inspired by the folklore of Mesoamerica. And we are following the storylines of two young women. First we have Indir. She's a Dreamer. She and her dreamer sisters are able to see beyond the reality of this world when they enter a parallel world. But she's hiding a secret. Lately, when she tries to dream she sees nothing, it's all black. So she's unable to see the future or know the correct path for the choices of the people around her. And as a new king rises to the throne, Indir must keep this secret and one other in order to keep her home and herself safe. On the flip side, we've got Saya. She is our other main character. She's being trotted around the kingdom by her mother, who's exploiting her gift of sight. She's not a Dreamer, because she's not formally trained, but she has some future sight to her. Her mother takes the glory of her sight by offering medications and healings, but it's only through Saya's sight that she's able to know how to do anything that helps. So she's like, "Oh, interesting. You have a pain in your foot. I'll be back tomorrow with some instructions about that". And then "Saya What do I do?", but her mother gets all the glory for it. Right? She wears a necklace, Saya wears a necklace at her mother's insistence to keep her safe. But when that necklace goes missing, her true gifts began to come to light. And she and we also realize that her life has always been a lie. I did this book on audio, because I got it as a free ALC from Libro.fm, and the cover is gorgeous. The narration was excellent. But the story was at times a little bit hard to follow. So I'd recommend either picking up a paper copy or doing this as a tandem read with both print and audio. If you really love to be read to like I do, I would have been well served if I could have been able to flip back and forth in the story rather than just trying to put the pieces together myself. This is Liz Huerta's debut novel and that only showed in that there are certain parts that I think were supposed to be, "Wow, what a surprise" that I saw coming from quite a ways off. But you can also tell that Huerta really took her time writing this novel, The world building feels ancient and like she's tapping into a story that already exists, rather than to having to create a new one from scratch, even though I've not read anything like this before. So it feels like it exists somewhere in the world, but I've never gotten to see it before. Readers should know that on Goodreads and anywhere else you look for this book, it currently looks like a standalone novel. But the cliffhanger ending makes it very clear that there is more to come in this story. I searched the internet for the sequel, and I found way buried in the search results, a really lovely and touching article from the San Diego Tribune saying that this is part of two book duology. So I got more and more frustrated thinking "Wait, that can't be the end of the story. What is happening?" There is another book coming. It's just not publicly known yet, I guess. So this one was *The Lost Dreamer* by Lizz Huerta.

Mary Heim 13:28

Okay, talk about one that sounds right up my alley. That sounds great. I'm gonna have to put that on my list, but maybe I'll wait till book two is a little bit closer.

Kaytee Cobb 13:35

Yeah, I think that's a good idea. Because right now we don't even have a release date. Like it could be three years and who wants that?

Mary Heim 13:40

No, nobody? No, I certainly don't want that.

Kaytee Cobb 13:43

All right. What's your second book Mary?

Mary Heim 13:45

All right, Kaytee, my second book this week is *How to Manage Your Home Without Losing Your Mind* by Dana K. White. The internet is probably already very familiar with Dana White. She was new ish to me. But I know that her blog "A Slob Comes Clean" is hugely popular, has been around for a while. And this book, her first, is definitely not an under the radar gem. It is beloved all over Goodreads and Storygraph and the internet. I think that this book just released before I really had a home to manage. So it slipped you know, kind of away from my periphery but I am so glad that I found it and it is has totally ended up earning it spot on my perma shelves. So in this book, Dana White breaks down her philosophies on maintaining her home. But unlike a lot of other organization and cleaning books, she does not come from a place of having this all figured out, always being a natural born organizer and cleaner. As you can tell by the name of her blog, Dana White is a former slob who was finally fed up with the state of her home. And instead just started implementing these systems to make it easier to maintain and keep in a state of harmony without having that natural knack for it. Now I will say I have never identified as a slob and there were for sure parts of this book that I didn't feel like applied to me and I just kind of skimmed over those, but others totally hit home. And I'm so happy to say that so many of her tips and her systems and her ways of thinking about maintaining your home, totally struck a chord. I am still going strong with them even a few months later. For me being a full time working parent with a full time working spouse and young kids, I was... kid, young kid,

Kaytee Cobb 15:27

Young child.

Mary Heim 15:28

Yeah, I was just so sick of being too spent at the end of the day to clean and I was sick of spending whole weekends doing nothing but cleaning just to feel like we were staying afloat. The thing I liked most about this book, aside from how readable it is really easy to just pick up and dig into a few short chapters at a time, but that it really reminded me of Kendra Adachi's *The Lazy Genius Way*, in that she doesn't just tell you how to do things. She teaches you how to create your own systems for what works for you and your family and your home and you can adapt them however, however you would like. So like I said above, it was really easy to take what applied to me and leave what didn't and I think this book would be a great one to just meet you where you're at, regardless of where you're coming from, on kind of the slob spectrum, right? I just love what she has done in this book. And like I said, I already have a permanent copy for my shelves so that I can flip back to it anytime I need a refresher. Highly recommended if there is any part of maintaining your home that feels overwhelming to you. Or like you just need some reimagining on how you're doing things to make them run a little bit smoother. This book is filled with good tips. I loved it. That is *How to Manage Your Home Without Losing Your Mind* by Dana White.

Kaytee Cobb 16:42

Okay, I have to say, Mary, you're reading my mind this week. I just had this book brought onto my radar because of our mutual friend Amy Alan Clark, who had a great episode with Dana White, basically saying readers want more time to read. How can we not waste that time cleaning our houses? Which, which that is always my MO anything I could do to make it so I have more time to read less time cleaning. I'm for it. And even in that short episode, I came away with quite a few tips even though I also do not consider myself a slob. I'm on the other end of the slob spectrum, as you pointed out. So I'm really excited to dig into this a little more because Dana had some really great ideas.

Kaytee Cobb 17:23

It's lots of things that I felt like "Oh, that's so simple. Why have I never thought of that before? Or why haven't I heard about it?" And there's no disrespect to the state of your home from slob to immaculate. We are all in different seasons of our lives when it feels easier or harder to maintain. I just love that she is like "No judgment, no stress. Here's some great ideas" and they are like the path of least resistance and most easy to maintain. I really loved it. I will be really curious to hear what you think. I think you'll like it, Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 17:53

All right. I'm excited to pick that one up. Okay, my second book this week kind of pairs up with your first one Mary and that it's thrillery and kind of one night standy it's Like A Sister by Kellye Garrett. I got, this cracks me up, I got so many direct messages about this book and they weren't saying, "Kaytee I love this book. You should totally read this book." They were saying "Kaytee, Bahni Turpin is the narrator." And I was like, Okay, fine friends, you got me. I'll get it. I'm gonna pick it up. That's the way to go. So I did. Here's our setup. Desiree Pierce is a reality TV star and an Instagram influencer, until she's not. She is found dead in the Bronx in a park only a few blocks away from her half sister Lena's home. And even though the two of them haven't spoken in more than two years, Lena is sure that her death isn't the overdose that the cops have said that it is. The police have written her off though as just another Black girl who got mixed up with the wrong stuff and it killed her. Lena is the polar opposite of Desiree. She's a graduate student at Columbia. She shuns the spotlight, and Lena has made it a point to distance herself from both Desiree and their father, a hip hop mogul. But that doesn't mean she's not bereft at the news of Desiree's passing and she's willing to untangle a web of secrets and lies to get to the bottom of it. Like I said already, this is very much a one night stand book like Meredith has told us about. It absolutely did what I needed at the time. I blasted through an entire puzzle in an afternoon while I listened to the book, which really means while I listened to Bahni read me the book. The setup reminded me a bit of Long Bright River by Liz Moore. But this was not nearly as focused on the police side of things. So and it also wasn't nearly as like brainy and cerebral. However, if you found that one to be interesting, which I did, because of the sister dynamics, but it was a little character driven for you, this one could be a really good fit for you instead. It's very glitzy on the cover. We've got like, like pearls and spilled glass of red wine, bright red and dark black on the cover. It looks like a book that goes with a one night stand. So, this one was fine, and also forgettable. It's Like A Sister by Kellye Garrett.

Mary Heim 20:11

But long live Bahni's audio narration forever.

Kaytee Cobb 20:17

I love it. All right, my third book this week Kaytee is Part of Your World by Abby Jimenez. Now Abby Jimenez is beloved by Bookstagram and I will admit and yes, for whatever reason I just hadn't been compelled to pick up her books in the past. I did however get approved to read an early copy of this one on Netgalley and I thought why not? I'll give it a shot. I need something light and fun. Our bookish friend Betsie Ikenberry agreed to buddy read it with me for what has now become our fun little rom com buddy read partnership and we both inhaled it. Okay, so here's the setup. Alexis Montgomery, our protagonist is a physician in a renowned local physician legacy family. She carries the weight of her family name on her shoulders. She takes her job and all that comes with it super seriously. She is just coming out of a relationship with a fellow big deal doctor at her hospital. That has been a not so great experience for her emotionally. There is some verbal abuse there and she just finds herself in this cute tiny dive bar one night coming back to Minneapolis. And you know, just kind of connecting with those around her. She accepts a bet and winds up eating grilled cheese at midnight with a cute local younger carpenter Daniel and his baby goats. I'll leave that there. Baby goats. You heard me correctly. Their chemistry is undeniable, their banter is next level, but Alexis feels beholden to her job and her family's legacy and can't imagine leaving her world behind, even though she finds herself pulled more and more to Daniel's world by the minute. So now like I mentioned before, a quick heads up, this is definitely a feel good rom com, but it also deals with some really heavy and difficult topics, which I think is kind of a hallmark to this author. So please be aware of that going in. I think the content warning and triggers are pretty well described on the internet. So just be mindful of that before picking this one up. And it's certainly handled well. But it's not pieces of the plot that you can just skip over. It's a pretty big part of this story. However, that said, this book was just so good. These characters are so incredibly well drawn. Their chemistry is palpable. We see this incredible, healthy loving relationship, the antithesis of toxic masculinity in our main character. There's the teeniest bit of this kind of magic in this small town and how the story comes together. There is redemption and finding yourself and issuing what's expected of you in order to pursue the life you love. It was just so fun to read such a heart filler. Abby Jimenez is an incredible writer. She made this book come alive. I truly can't believe it has taken me so long to get to her backlist, and this will absolutely not be my last. That is Part of Your World by Abby Jimenez.

Kaytee Cobb 20:18

Always

Kaytee Cobb 20:53

Okay, question. Did you sing while you were reading? Because I got a little mermaid fan girl in my house.

Mary Heim 23:22

Did I have that song stuck in my head every time I looked at the cover? Yes, yes, I did. I did. But it was still so worth it. I loved it so much.

Kaytee Cobb 23:31

But there's no Little Mermaid references in here?

Mary Heim 23:34

Not directly but there are this is gonna sound I almost didn't go this deep in the description because I was like, I'm gonna sound bonkers. But it there is a little bit of like Disney reference in very, very, very small and almost unnoticeable ways if you're not paying attention to it through the magic that's kind of woven within the story. It sounds like how on earth would that work? But I promise you it does. It really works.

Kaytee Cobb 24:05

Well. I'm very excited to get through this one too. So Mary, you're three for three. Well done, my friend. Thanks. Okay, my third book this week, I almost I was worried that you were gonna bring this book. So I'm glad we've now made it to book six and there's not been a repeat here. My third book this week is Atlas of the Heart by Brene. Brown. When I picked up this stunning, gorgeous book, I was sure it was both a coffee table book and a book that I would just flip through when I wanted something pretty in my eyes and be going to include a bunch of stuff I'd already read before since I'm such a Brene Brown fan girl. Instead, it felt like I discovered No, I did not write this. I totally wrote, "It felt like I discovered a new world", which has nothing to do with what Mary was just talking about. But if I could be part of Brene's world I would absolutely do so. I did in fact read it from cover to cover and went with a slow but steady approach just one chapter every other day to really let it soak in. And I bought the audio as well so that Brene could read it to me. I didn't realize how smart I was until I actually started reading it. Brene reads the audiobook herself and she recognizes that audiobook listeners are typically doing other things while they listen. So I was not. I held the book in my hands and let her read to me, but she realizes that a lot of people are driving when they're doing audiobooks, or going to the grocery store or whatever. So the audiobook is kind of like a class lecture, where you can raise your hand and ask for clarification or ask her to repeat important things, she'll say, "That quote is so powerful. Let me read that again." And she'll describe the photos and drawings that you find inside. She holds your hand and walks you through a table of information. Rather than being like, "Here's a bunch of info" and you let your eyes just glaze over. And you're like, "Wow, that looks like a lot of words that I don't need to read". The chapters are organized by groups of emotions and experiences. And this book covers 87 emotions and experiences that she has defined in her work. For example, Chapter Seven is "places we go with others," and explored therein we have compassion, pity, empathy, sympathy, boundaries, and comparative suffering. And you can see how those all are like a family, right? They all kind of live near each other in the same part of the neighborhood. It's easy to see from that list also, that not all of these are pure emotional states. That's why she expands the book the way that she does, because sometimes experience is what makes the feeling happen, you know. So this book is absolutely a keeper for my shelves in a number of ways. First, now that I've read and listened to it cover to cover, it serves like a reference book. I can go back to it and pick it up and say, "I remember Brene talked about the difference between disappointment and discouragement. So let me go back and remind myself about that." Or if I'm feeling disconnected from someone that's important to me, I can check out her section on cultivating meaningful connection and give myself some really great reminders about what in that relationship might need some tending to. Basically I loved this book, and it could be a great place to start with Brene. Although if you're really just a brand new newbie, I'd still push you toward either The Gifts of Imperfection or Braving the Wilderness as a first step. But if you're already a huge fan of her work like I am, this is still a keeper for your shelves. It still deserves to be read. It's excellent. It's The Atlas of the Heart by Brene Brown

Kaytee Cobb 27:23

Cosign on every single thing you just said, Kaytee, just cosign. But also, you have, I have never so quickly added a book to my libro.FM cart as I did when you were just talking about this. Now, I cannot wait to have Brene in my ears reading this book to me. I love it.

Kaytee Cobb 27:41

Well, so Morgan Tallman and I buddy read this together so we could talk about each chapter. And we both were doing the same thing with the paper and the audio and we've now decided that's how everybody needs to read it. Because Brene being like, "Over on that other page, you might see a photo of me in the 80s", and the way she describes herself in these photos is, it's adorable. I love it. And it feels like Brene is chatting to you the whole time, even though it's full of like really impactful information and data.

Mary Heim 28:07

I love that she's such a great teacher. Love it. Love it. Love it.

Kaytee Cobb 28:12

Okay, those were our six current reads. And now we get to get into our deep dive. So I want to set this up a little bit, because people might be like, "Wait, didn't we just hear about this. So on episode 33 of season four, Meredith and Mindy talked about their reading seasons. And Mary and I wanted to pivot a little bit on that conversation. So today, we're going to talk about reading during a switch up. This isn't a season like going from not being a parent to being a parent, that kind of lasts for an indefinite period of time. This is a temporary life change. Right now, Mary, you are going through life change. You've finished with one job, you're starting a new one soon, you're kind of in the in between. So what does your reading look like these days? And how has that affected the way and the when of your reading life?

Mary Heim 28:53

Yeah, you know, Kaytee I will start by saying my doing anything in a period of shift can be really tough for me. My Enneagram six brain goes into overdrive, hyper producer mode, and wants to tackle all of the things but also simultaneously has a really hard time focusing on the things that I enjoy, or slowing down and savoring a book. Instead, I like to clean out every closet in my house and you know, like, rather than necessarily always deal with what's in front of me and in this transition. I mean, I think I can be pretty candid that like there's been excitement but there's also been grief and there's been uncertainty and that can really mess with your reading life or like you know, finding time to do things that you know, you really just enjoy. So knowing that about myself in this particular period of shift and transition has been really helpful for me and getting me to be more intentional about taking time to read. So I feel like I find myself, I tend to go one of two ways in my reading life when I am experiencing this shift This kind of period of uncertainty, I almost see it like rocky ground, right? Like you're not in the stable previous. For this situation, I'm not in my previous stable job, I'm not newly finding stability in my next step. So it's a little rocky. And I feel like I found a lot of support and help in going towards either very tangible, useful books like business and life design, learning a new skill, or the second direction being total comfort read, and unputdownable pretty like brain candy.

Kaytee Cobb 28:55

I was going to be super impressed there for a minute.

Mary Heim 30:35

It's not all business books, trust me. What does it look like for you to be reading during a shift?

Kaytee Cobb 30:40

Well, I thought of three different times in my life, when I've seen a period of time where my reading shifted for a short while, right. And the first one that I thought about was when we moved in the past, or even recently, when we're doing our home renovations, I have busy hands all day, every day. But I know it's a short period of time, I know that my readings not broken because I can't pick up a book. It's because I'm physically moving, and I'm exhausted by the end of the day. So audiobooks are my best friend, especially because of that accompanying physical exhaustion by the end of the day, like my hands are too tired to lift a book to my face, right? So my reading in those periods of time tends toward propulsive. But also I made this word up pausable as in able to be paused, because there's a person coming in that needs to know where to put that dresser in the upstairs bedroom, or do you want the floor laid sideways in this hallway or vertically, like what is happening, so you have to be able to dip in and out of it really fast. But once you're in, you want to keep going, propulsive but pausable. During this most recent renovation, I read the Lightseekers by Femi Kayode, which exactly fits that description and also The Last Cuentista by Donna Barbra Higuera, which both of those I brought to the show relatively recently. So you can go listen to me talk about them. And both of them really fit into that propulsive and pausable situation that I was looking for at the time.

Mary Heim 32:07

I love that. I think that's such an important distinction to make is that you are setting yourself up for success in what you're reading. Like you are not deciding that now is a great time to read War and Peace. That can come for you at another time in your life. You're setting yourself up to be able to access reading in however you're ready to receive it right now. And Kaytee, I feel like before I dig into like I of course, you know, kind of thought about some books that I've really turned to at particular times, particularly in regards to career shifts. But a point that really stuck out to me as I was thinking about this episode and preparing for it, a point that I think you really helped me identify that while reading I think for so many of us is a way to learn and to escape and to witness. It doesn't always occur to me to use my reading as a tool, because I see it as my hobby as my downtime is my connection point. And I realize how silly this sounds when I say it out loud. But it didn't always occur to me to use my reading to my advantage during these times of transition, like use it like a muscle or a skill to seek out books to instruct me about the changes I'm making, or to kind of, you know, help me devote a percentage of my reading life that I wouldn't typically devote to something like continuing education, for example, not necessarily something I pick up for fun. But this is a great skill that we have honed of being readers that can come in really handy. We have this kind of skill set at our fingertips that can make these shifts easier if we choose to access it in this way. So that was something that I feel like in preparing for this episode, something that you had said really put that at the forefront for me of like this is this is kind of this like magical toolbox that we have that can be supportive as we go through shifts.

Kaytee Cobb 33:59

Yeah, yeah, I like that. Okay, so I'm going to talk about another period of change in my life, which was when I had knee surgery, which longtime listeners will remember was two and a half years ago, at this point. I was laid out on the couch a lot for a number of weeks because I had no weight bearing capacity on my right leg. I was able to lean hard into reading paper books during that time. And I remember laying on that couch and finishing a book a day sometimes. During that time, I was able to sink into longer stories, or not because I honestly had nowhere else to go and nothing else to do. There were people helping me with my kids because I couldn't you know get up and change a diaper or anything. I read the Dry by Neal Shusterman in one day. I read Bringing Down the Duke by Evie Dunmore in one day and I read One of Us is Lying in about two days. And they were all books that completely sucked me in. But they're also very closely associated with that time in my head when I couldn't go anywhere. I was like maybe I could get myself a glass of water. And that was it. I had to take myself to the bathroom occasionally. But I could not be productive in the way that I normally am. And I read nothing on audio. I listened to no books at all during that time, and it was about six weeks that could do nothing of the sort.

Mary Heim 35:15

Which is like such a huge pivot for you. Oh my gosh, at that, I mean, that is like your bread and butter right there are audiobooks. But again, like a way to set yourself up for meeting your reading where you are.

Kaytee Cobb 35:27

I love that. All right, what kind of books you want to throw at us here, Mary?

Mary Heim 35:30

So Kaytee, I was reflecting on and again, this is very career specific. But I think, you know, like, I have made one shift in my career already, switching from Community Mental Health going into higher ed and it felt like a pretty big life transition shift at that time to be able to kind of shut off some of this, like, who I was, and how I showed up in my work in the past. And now I'm making that shift again, from higher ed into private practice again, you know, kind of within the mental health counseling world. So something that I have found really useful for me, and again, in being very intentional about my reading and using it to help me spoken like a true therapist helped me process and make meaning of this these times. I mean, I think it's really important to identify the way that your life is shifting, and maybe you know, be able to grieve or whatever, what you're leaving behind, in order to make room for excitement moving forward. So some of the books that I feel like have really helped me do that both in that previous career shift and then again, now, the first one is Designing your Life by Bill Burnett and Dave Evans. I read this one kind of at the beginning of that last career transition, and it really helped me tangibly conceptualize where I wanted to go, what I wanted my life to look like as it relates to work. You know, I think it can be too easy to just jump from one thing to the next. In this one, this book in particular, I think is really good at helping you identify what matters, how do I want my work to look for me? How do I want to show up in my work life? That was a really great one like that kind of, I feel like touched on the more like, emotional, manifesting, ooey, gooeey side of the business book world, even though it's the woowoo, even though it's really not. It is very practical. But if we're gonna flip to the complete opposite end, you know, when I switched into that new position, and I was, you know, jumping from one field to another, I read The First 90 Days by Michael Watkins, and that is a book that I would never see at the bookstore

and be like, "Wow, I need to pick this up". But it was a really helpful tool in this transition to a very, you know, typical, more corporate world coming from community mental health. It was really helpful to help me conceptualize how to get up and running, what to know, who to talk to, what to ask, et cetera. So that when again, would I ever pick it up just for fun? Probably not. But, like, I use that tool of being this voracious reader to be able to set me up and give me a new way of looking at that transition. I loved that one. And now, you know, going back to total ooey, gooey woowoo, I loved maybe not woowoo, but *Wintering* by Katherine May. I know this is one that is beloved within our bookish community. But when I was feeling a little unmoored, or like I wasn't sure yet which direction I wanted to go in, this one was lovely. I feel like it really helped me find comfort and be willing to just kind of stay in this uncertain space and feel this wintering of my soul as, as I knew spring was on its way, right? But you don't exactly know what that looks like yet. She, Katherine May, does a really good job in that book of kind of helping you find comfort in where you are right now, if you're feeling uncertain. And I think that that little trio is a really nice one maybe to bring when you're approaching a career shift or kind of jumping, jumping into a new role or responsibility. And of course, returning back to counseling from higher ed over the last couple of years, I've had a lot of fun digging back into some of my psychology textbooks, which I won't recommend here. But of course,

Kaytee Cobb 39:13

That would be interesting, though.

Mary Heim 39:14

That would be quite a show. I mean, Kaytee rereading my beloved Brene Brown and had made note of that before I even knew that you were bringing *Atlas of the Heart*, but you know, doing a refresh of *The Body Keeps the Score* by Bessel Van Der Kolk, who is my trauma therapy hero. I mean, it's just been really helpful to get my brain back into practicing clinician mode. But I really do think that like these books, these very popular kind of psych based books are also really accessible to somebody going through a transition as well going through a shift in their life and being able to say like, "Hey, what is going on in my brain and in my body right now in this making this big shift?" So that's kind of not not the comfort reads, not the unputdownable reads, but the more intentional and maybe even dipping into business book category that I feel like I found myself drawn to.

Kaytee Cobb 40:03

I like that. I think that's, that's really useful to have kind of a toolbox, like you said to draw from in times like that. I had, I had one other time that I wanted to talk about which you touched on grief. And what I wanted to dip into here was when my mother in law passed away. I saw of course, as you might expect a low in my reading as my heart processed that loss. When I look back, I went and scrolled way, way back in my Goodreads to look on my reading during that time, and I read multiple middle grade books and multiple romance books. And all of them were on my Kindle at that time. So strangely, I ended up with a heavy audio shift, a heavy paper book shift, and this one is a heavy Kindle shift. Part of that was the fact that we had to quickly hit the road to be with my husband's family. So I really only had my Kindle with me. And part of that was that it was all my brain could handle at the time. I read *The Honey Don't List* by Christina Lauren, *The Happy Ever After Playlist* by Abby Jimenez and *As Brave As You* by Jason Reynolds, all during that time, because I needed soft, I needed a soft place to land. And I couldn't do my regular audio, because we were kind of sitting in... not Shiva, we're not Jewish, but we

were kind of sitting Shiva together. We were just spending a lot of slow, quiet time together. And I needed to be able to be present during that time, and then tap into my Kindle when I was ready to go to bed and to disconnect for the evening. So that was no again, it wasn't, it wasn't years. This isn't a season of reading, it was a short shift, that I had to let my body lean into the way it wanted to.

Mary Heim 41:46

And Kaytee, I think you bring up a really good point for me is that even in the last couple of months, it has felt really hard for me to pick up books or stay with something that I you know, is really requires my full attention. And I've almost found myself judging or being a little bit harsh with myself of like, "Oh, why am I just, you know, reading these popcorn books just grabbing for fluff all the time?" And I had to stop myself and realize like, there is nothing wrong with letting your reading life serve you. There is nothing wrong with saying like, "Life is really hard right now. And what I need to balance it is something that brings me peace and joy, something that takes me outside of what feels difficult or overwhelming and makes me laugh and makes me smile". Or maybe it's hard for me to find those things in the rest of my life. So the antidote is going to be this coping mechanism of dipping into a really joyful, you know, happy alternative universe in my books. And I feel like that's kind of the other, the other road that I walk down when I'm reading in a time of a shift is comfort books. Rom coms, YA is always always a comfort hit for me, I love a good mystery for like page turning brain engagement, that's pretty low stakes. Like I'll read, you know, a Veronica Speedwell or Jane Wonderly something that's like, you know, a spunky heroine who you know, she's going to solve the mystery, and everything's gonna be okay, again, she's gonna be okay at the end. You know, I also kind of, so seeking that I think when there's less of it in your day to day life, is 100% okay, and I think I see, as readers, we will often get down on ourselves for like, "Oh, why can't I, or within the last, you know, particularly the last two years of the pandemic, why do I just keep reaching for you know, XYZ reads? Why do I keep reaching for comfort reads?" it's okay to want to escape a little bit of what we are experiencing when things feel hard, and balance it try and find some balance in your life by bringing that in through what you're consuming. And absolutely those comfort books. And also, I really love a memoir, sometimes in times of change, it's a really good reminder for me that all of our lives go in seasons have these shifts have these kind of peaks and valleys that aren't, you know, kind of our standard operating times, but we just have to move through them in order to get to the other side. And I feel like it's helpful to see that reflected in someone else's story to see like look at them go through these peaks and valleys, watch them come out on the other side, see that most people don't have it all figured out and connect with someone else's narrative in that way. And find that for yourself and kind of, you know, maybe make a parallel meaning between your story and somebody's memoir. I think that can be really powerful and helpful too.

Kaytee Cobb 44:50

Yeah, memoir makes me feel both like I get to go a little bit more inside myself and that I got to get outside of myself at the same time. Yeah, because of the way that the narrator draws you into their story. And also says, here's where I diverge from you. That's That's very cool. Mary, I like that you brought that up. Hmm. All right. I think that was a really great discussion. And I'm excited to hear from you listeners about your own big life changes and what you saw happen for that short chunk of time that you felt like the ground was shifting underneath you. Of course, we'll put up a post about this on social media, and we want to hear from you about it.

Mary Heim 45:29

Definitely. Yes. And I think too, don't you think, Kaytee that it's always impactful to hear other readers identify that to be able to say like, "I am in a funky time with my reading right now, or all I want to read is XYZ". I'll never forget when I was newly postpartum and being like, I can't finish a book. And Meredith was like, "All I read for five years after I had kids was cozy mysteries". And it was just so normalizing to me to hear a fellow reader say that, and for me to see you know, how widely she reads now and be like, "Oh, this isn't forever. This is a way that I am counterbalancing what feels tricky or tough or new or overwhelming in my life right now", using this great skill that we have of reading.

Kaytee Cobb 46:11

It is. It's a marvel. All right, let's press some books into our listeners hands today, Mary, what are you going to press this week?

Mary Heim 46:18

All right, Kaytee, so I hesitated to bring two rom coms to the show this week. But as you know, and as we have literally just finished talking about, I have found a lot of comfort and joy in reading to escape right now with books that I know will have a happy ending as I've been kind of going through this time of change. So I just couldn't not this week. I am pressing The Bromance Book Club, the first in a series by Lyssa Kay Adams. This is another one that has been all over the internet for a very long time. I had previously avoided it because as you know, for a little while, and I hate to admit it, but I'm just going to own this part of myself, I thought I was too good for rom coms, and oh how I have since eaten my words, because it's all I want to read right now. I love this series. Let me tell you why. In this first installment, we have Thea and Gavin, a couple who got married young and quick and had babies right away. They found themselves in this stagnant and unhappy spot in their marriage Thea has finally had it she wants a divorce after a blow up fight that she and her husband have had. He wants to turn things around, but he's got some of his own demons to deal with before she'd consider taking him back. Enter the bromance book club, our titular you know like character that's not a character. This group of some of Nashville's most high flying and powerful dudes who get together and read romance novels, to better their relationships. This book is full of everything I love. Healthy relationships, again, this antithesis of toxic masculinity, this group of guy friends who explore their emotions together and support one another love each other. They help their friends truly become better themselves in order to show up in the best and healthiest way for their relationships. And of course, the writing is tight, it is excellent and laugh out loud, funny. It's heartwarming and truly real. I am pressing the first in the series here. But know that I have almost already read the entire series in the span of the last few months. And I can attest to that each book to follow is just as good. And if you love the first you won't want to wait until you can get your hands on the next one. This is another one that you're just gonna want a hug when you finish it. And that's what I need right now and maybe always. That is the Bromance Book Club by Lyssa Kay Adams.

Kaytee Cobb 48:28

I love that you pressed this. I also love that this is one of there's like a very small number of romances and romcoms that I've read that have a married couple at the center of our story, because oftentimes, it's all the time leading up to the wedding and maybe an epilogue that's post wedding. And that's it right? So this is very unique in that way.

Mary Heim 48:52

Yes, it made me want to seek out any other married romances I could find because I very much you know, you see a lot of obviously not to the extreme that you see but you're like yes, this is what it's like to be married. You have to talk about what's going on with the kids and and your to do list and it's a good reminder that like there's still there's still so much love in a marriage as well. It was really fun to read a married romance. Give me more of those for sure.

Kaytee Cobb 49:17

Love that. Okay, the book. I'm going to press this week harkens back to my bookish moment, I'm going to press *The Warmth of Other Suns* by Isabel Wilkerson. On episode 39 of season three about a year ago, Jamie Golden pressed *Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson, and I totally cosign that press. But I went over to my shelves, and I really took a look at them and I realized I have *Caste* on my shelves, but the book that made me fall in love with Isabel Wilkerson is *The Warmth of Other Sons* and I did not have her first book because I borrowed it from a library. As I mentioned at the beginning of the episode, I knew I had to fix it. *The Warmth of Other Suns* is narrative nonfiction of the highest caliber. Isabel Wilkerson peels back the layers on the Great Migration through a deep dive into historical documents, but also via the personal stories of three specific real life people who migrated within the US during that time. The Great Migration refers to the time between 1915 and 1970, when nearly 6 million people left the South for places where they thought the racism would be less, and the potential futures would be brighter. That migration changed the racial makeup of certain cities like Harlem, in New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago, each of which is a city with a large black population. So to that effect, we follow Ida Mae from Mississippi to Chicago, George who moved from Florida to Harlem, and Robert who left Louisiana to move out West. Those personal stories are interwoven through this book to give it a really heart to heart personal through line. You spend a chapter learning about food or churches or sundown towns. And then another chapter of feeling like you're visiting with an old like an elderly friend, not just an old friend, but an elderly friend, and hearing their personal story. It's not a small book by any means at 622 pages and it's a really great slow but steady choice for that reason. But this 2010 gem is wonderfully written and superbly researched. I'm so glad I read it and I'm so glad to press it into all your hands today. It's *The Warmth of Other Suns* by Isabel Wilkerson.

Mary Heim 51:26

I love that Katie, what a great press. Excellent.

Kaytee Cobb 51:29

All right, that is it for this week. As a reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me Kaytee at @notesonbookmarks on Instagram, and Meredith is at @Meredith.reads.

Mary Heim 51:39

And you can find me Mary at @Maryreadsandsips on Instagram,

Kaytee Cobb 51:43

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.

Mary Heim 51:52

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

Kaytee Cobb 51:59

And if you really want to help us become a patron for only five bucks a month, get tons of bonus content and bookish community, or you can rate and review us on Apple podcasts or shout us out on social media. All of those make a huge difference in our being able to find our perfect audience.

Mary Heim 52:13

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

Kaytee Cobb 52:19

Okay, until next week, may your coffee be hot

Mary Heim 52:22

and your book be unputdownable.

Kaytee Cobb 52:24

Happy reading Mary.

Mary Heim 52:25

Happy reading Kaytee.