



Season 5, Episode 27: Popcorn Reading + Joys and Challenges of Reading as Our "Job"

Mon, Feb 6, 2023 • 52:40

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:10

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

Kaytee Cobb 00:24

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:33

I'm Meredith Monday Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas and reading is definitely my relaxation.

Kaytee Cobb 00:41

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico and buddy reading brings me such joy. This is episode number 27 of season five. And we're so glad you're here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:52

Kaytee, I do not know. I have never known, I have never even come close to understanding how you do as much buddy reading as you do. But I know it brings you so much joy. And I I love it so much. Like I legitimately love how much you love it.

Kaytee Cobb 01:10

It's a really big part of my reading life. And we actually, this is not you know, the episode, but we had a lot of conversations in the bookish friends group about how some people are more reading partner people because of your episode with Roxanna, and they want that one solid, committed relationship. And some people are more social butterflies and they want to be able to flip from buddy group to buddy group and read with different readers and get different experiences. And I'm actually I'm a bit of both. I'm like, bi buddy reader, I guess. Cuz I have a reading partner in Katie, and then I buddy read with all kinds of people. And I love both.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:45

All right, so we want to let you know right here at the top of the show that we are going to talk later in the show about the perks, the upsides and there are some and the downsides, and there are some, of reading being your job. So Kaytee and I are going to deep dive on that a little bit later. But first, it is the first week of the month you guys know it is so we have a little bit of mischief to manage. But it's not going to take very long. Kaytee, do you want to let them know what we're doing this month to make sure people know about our Patreon subscription and how they can join us?

Kaytee Cobb 02:21

Yes, I have two quick points I want to touch on for y'all this month. Every once in a while we talk about the Indie Press List and then we'll get comments on Instagram." What is the indie press list? What does that mean? Is that a patron only bonus episode?" It's been a long time since we released that content into the main feed. So we want to give you another taste of it. This coming Friday, February 10, we will drop a backlist in the press list episode for you into the main feed so that you can hear from one of our bookstore partners. Five fantastic titles. And we hope that that means you'll take a listen and you'll say I think I need more of this in my life. And you'll jump over to Patreon and join us. If you do, I have one more thing I want to tell you about which is that we just introduced a new tier on Patreon. We now have bookish Super Friends. They mostly are volunteering for the idea of paying us a little extra every month. But also on that first Thursday of the month, they get what's called "the best of the rest" Indie Press List, which is additional titles from that month's bookstore and that means they might fill their carts a little more. Our indie bookstore partners are loving it. The bookish super friends love it. And all of it can be yours for the small price of \$10 a month. Now this feels like an infomercial. It gets a little weird. Be listening for that Indie Press List on Friday, February 10. We can't wait to hear what you think of it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:41

All right, good Mischief Managed for the month for the whole rest of the month. You get ad free, bookish conversation. That wasn't that hard, right?

Kaytee Cobb 03:49

Just a little snippet.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:51

Exactly. All right, Kaytee let's talk about our bookish moments of the week. What have you got?

Kaytee Cobb 03:56

Okay, so this is a circle back again, on a fountain wish. On episode 12 of season five, I wished for a buddy reading app that allowed for staggered reading, right? It turns out the app exists. It's called Fable. And I circled back on episode 15 of season five to tell you all about it. Well, now it's three months later. I'm circling around one more time. I'm not going to do this over and over again to tell you that Fable heard me talk about them on currently reading. Oh, reached out to me and this morning, I got to meet with a marketing director and an editorial director through the Fable app. We zoomed for half an hour. I got to hear about the app's history, how it's grown, what they're doing, what they're excited about. I got to give my own suggestions about what I would love to see in that app. And I'm very excited about not only the fact that it exists, but the fact that they loved hearing about Currently Reading talking

about Fable, and that we have tons of great buddy reads going on over there. Meredith we just opened a new buddy read on Fable which is called A Journey to Three Pines. So If anybody is reading along with you and Roxanna for that portion of the podcast, they can go over there and talk with other readers about chapter by chapter, what is happening in the story? What got revealed about that character? Is there a plot point you loved or hated. It'll all be there on fable. So you can go search it, it'll be linked in the show notes. Very excited.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 05:19

That is very exciting. Kaytee. I did not know that you were doing that. But good for Fable for reaching out and having a conversation with you. Because you are a fantastic person to give them that feedback on the features that would make it better and easier for readers and for groups of readers. So I'm so glad that you were able to do that. That's perfect.

Kaytee Cobb 05:38

I felt pretty special.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 05:40

Yeah, you are special. Kaytee. I mean, legitimately from a business perspective, that was a really smart thing for them to do. Okay, so my bookish moment of the week, I said, so I had a massage this week, every every month or so I tried to get a massage, and I do it through an app called Zeel. So we have the people come to our house, and it's really great. And I love it. And we've been doing it for a long time. So one thing I've always wanted to do, but I have never had the courage to do is to ask my Zeel massage therapist, who is not the same person every time, if I could listen to an audiobook instead of the spa music that they normally play. So in order to get my courage up, I put into the bookish friends group on Facebook, our Patreon subscriber group, I said, you know, what do you guys think about this, and everyone was very encouraging, and said, like, "Hey, I've actually done this and it's great". So I got up the courage. And when this lovely lady came to my house, I was like, Hey, would you mind? And she was like, Absolutely not. Kaytee, game changer. Yes, for whatever reason, when I get a massage, and I and I love massages, but when I do I get really in my head. And I have a lot of health anxiety that okay, I'm just gonna tell you guys the truth. I have a lot of health anxiety. And so when I get a massage, oftentimes, I will be thinking like, Wait, did you just rub me that way? Is she feeling some? Is there something weird that she's feeling that she's not telling you? And I will spin the entire massage about something dumb like that. And so, when I was listening to my audiobook, I was just able to enjoy the experience of it. And I was also my mind was, you know, occupied doing its thing. And it was, it was the most enjoyable massage I've had for a really, really long time. So I highly recommend if you are like me, you haven't had the courage to say hey, would this be okay? At least ask the question.

Kaytee Cobb 07:34

Okay, I have a very important question for you, Meredith. And it is Bluetooth speaker or air pods?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:39

I listen to air pods.

Kaytee Cobb 07:41

Okay. I wasn't sure if you asked this person if they wanted to jump right into the middle of an audio book with you or if you were in your own world.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:48

No, I said that I would do it on air pods, but then I felt... this whole... this is really embarrassing. I'm telling a lot of embarrassing things about myself. So I also felt the need to tell this woman that I was listening to a British mystery. Nothing spicy. Like for some reason, I felt like I needed her to know that I wasn't like it's just like it's just a...

Kaytee Cobb 08:12

Like somebody put a tape on her lips to cut her off.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 08:15

And I could tell she was just like, Fine, whatever. Just lay down. Stop talking now. Lay down and shut up.

Kaytee Cobb 08:25

I love it so much. Well, that was thrilling conversation.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 08:28

Wasn't it? That Yeah. Now you guys all know more about me than you wanted to. Okay. All right. Let's get into our current reads. Kaytee, what's your first book for us?

Kaytee Cobb 08:38

Okay, this one I got all prepped and then I got all in my head that maybe I was gonna steal it from you. So I'm hoping you haven't finished it yet. It's The Mountain in the Sea by Ray Nayler.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 08:48

Oh, no, I haven't. I haven't yet. And I'm glad you're going to talk about it, though.

Kaytee Cobb 08:52

Okay, for this book, which was an Indie Press List book, which again, you'll get to hear about on Friday, a little more. I don't know if I've ever gotten so many messages making sure I knew about a book before it released. Right? Although there is one coming up this year called Sea Change by Gina Chung that has an octopus on the front. And I'm like all the time. Kaytee, have you? Do you know about this book Kaytee?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:13

You're the octopus lady.

Kaytee Cobb 09:15

It's a lot. It's a lot. Like if I happen to grow extra arms and legs, I don't think anybody would be surprised. It's really bad. Right? So all my love of octopus has reached all corners of the internet. When

Bookmarks in North Carolina put this title on the November indie press list. I of course got it in a package full of great books from them, and I had to read it. Like I stole it, which I didn't because we bought it but it was amazing. This book is near future sci fi and explores a world in which octopuses live long enough to not just lay eggs and die, but also to raise their young, which allows them to pass along the knowledge that they gained over the course of a lifetime to the next generation. What was already an intelligent creature becomes super intelligent. And as rumors start to spread of this new to hyper intelligent species of octopus, it piques the interest of quite a few branches of science as you might imagine. First we have Dr. Ha Nguyen a marine biologist who has dedicated her life to studying cephalopods, Good job her. She is employed by a tech corporation known as DIANIMA, along with an artificially intelligent Android and a security agent that has seen some issues in his life. Concurrently, we've got a ship on the high seas, which uses slave labor and technology to fish the ocean to near extinction. The ship draws ever nearer to the Vietnamese archipelago, and the story starts to converge, but not before we start to be terrified by something newly brilliant under the sea. This book is multi layered and complex. It could have been a 300 page nonstop thrill ride, right? But instead, he takes the time to develop the time and the places that we find ourselves in. And that means you can't just jump in with both feet, read five pages, and know that you're going to race to the end. For Jason, my husband this posed a little bit of an issue when I tried to press it into his hands because he needs a faster start than that to get invested. For me taking the time to read about 50 pages and that first sitting by then I was into the story from that point on. I also really love the design of this book and the way that it reveals itself further to the reader as you progress in the story. You think that this cover and these like side edge things mean one thing, but as you read further and you realize the book is even smarter than you first expected it to be. Much like a sentient octopus. I also take this moment to note that my entire family got the memo about octopuses this year and I was showered with many, many gifts, both bookish and not that bookish that feature this creature and I'm not mad about it and I will absolutely share on our Instagram feed this week with both The Mountain in the Sea and this amazing gift bonanza that I got this year for Christmas because it is fabulous. This book is The Mountain in the Sea by Ray Nayler.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 12:01

Yeah, this is one of those ones from the Indie Press List that I was like a why didn't we all know about this book before and be I cannot wait to read it. But I did feel like I needed to put a little bit of space between when we brought it to The Indie Press List. So I'm glad you talked about it today. I am for sure going to be finishing this one because it is fascinating.

Kaytee Cobb 12:20

It very much gets you like thinking about what could happen. And I love books like that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 12:27

Right? All right. Well, I have three very different books to bring today. But I liked each of them in their own way. So let's start with the first one which is called The Getaway by Lamar Giles. Here's the setup. Our lead character is teenager Jay who's living his best life at Karloff Country, one of the world's most famous theme park resorts. He's got his family, his good friends and an incredible after school job at the property's main park. This is a truly plum gig because life outside of Karloff Country is a tough hang for a variety of dystopian reasons. But when people come to Karloff Country, they don't want to think about that. They want to get away from all of that. Well as things in the outside world get worse trouble starts

slowly making its way into Karloff Country. First Jay's friend Connie and her family disappear in the middle of the night. No one will talk about it at all. They want to pretend that it didn't happen. And then the richest and most powerful families start arriving only they don't leave. To tell you more would be to spoil much fun and twisty goodness. So don't read the Amazon setup because they just march right on like a bull in a china shop. You know what you need to know. All right, this book was recommended to me by Roxana. She saw the description of it and the cover, which is awesome, terrifying. I know. And she knew immediately poor Roxanna who had never read anything like this, she's like this would be perfect for you. And it really was. The theme park setting. You know, I love a creepy theme park where something's about to go really, really wrong. It's just one of my favorite settings for a book. And I like that this one took that setting and did something different with it than say, Fantasticland or Hide. This novel was much more rooted in class and race issues. And well, it definitely has the tone of YA story I do want to be clear about that. It also has a level of depth that kept me reading and I found really interesting, and I really liked the narrative tone of Lamar Giles, the author. He put me in the headspace of several of these teenagers, but he did it in a way that I could both understand them and not be annoyed about or annoyed by them, which is not an easy needle to thread for me. This book could definitely be shelved in the CLI fi or dystopian genres although it is official he labeled as a young adult horror. I wouldn't put it into that category because I just don't think it should be described as horror. There are definitely thriller aspects to it and there are some things that happen that are pretty horrific. But to me this was more young adult dystopian than true horror. But if you like Jordan Peele's, movies, if you like the works of Kiersten White and the most recent works of Tiffany D. Jackson, then I definitely think that this one will be right up your alley. This is The Getaway by Lamar Giles.

Kaytee Cobb 15:33

Nice. That sounds really good. I've read one of his but it had no thriller or horror elements to it at all. No mystery. No dystopia. It was like straightway and I was like, okay, I'm good on you. Thanks so much. That was lovely entry into my reading life, but I really want to pick this one up now.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 15:51

Yeah, this one is really good. And it's very fast read.

Kaytee Cobb 15:54

I bet. Everybody can look at the cover because that completely creeped me out.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 15:59

Yes, and it matches the story perfectly. It's very it's right on. Okay. Okay. Okay. All right. What's your next book?

Kaytee Cobb 16:07

Okay, for my next book, my caveat here is that you have to hold on to your 10 gallon hats because I am going to talk about Jesus and John Wayne by Kristin Kobes Du Mez. I had danced around this book for quite some time. You might even say I had to relearn how to two step in order to gently approach this novel, but I still don't know how to two step. It completely baffles me so we're going to need a new metaphor. Kristin Kobes Du Mez is a biblical scholar who uses this book to unpack 75 years of history with regard to Christian evangelicalism. In 2016 81% of white evangelicals voted for Donald Trump, and

many pollsters and preachers alike were baffled in the run up to that election. He seemed like a longshot, and many leaders from the Christian religion spoke directly to their bases stating that there were better options on the ballot. But as Kristin delves deep into the development of these different factions of Christianity, and how evangelicalism specifically developed an identity based around current political issues, she goes back in history, to show us not only how Donald Trump won the Republican ticket, and then the presidency, but also goes back to examine the voting around Ronald Reagan, and even Theodore Roosevelt, who was one of the first rugged, masculine Christians to start this narrative shift. And that's a whole sub genre of Christians, rugged, masculine Christianity, over the decades sends the Christian right, which has a strong voice politically, voted in Donald Trump, who has a lot of personal and professional qualities that are antithetical to the values that those voters profess. I feel like I'm dancing a little bit around this setup. It's a hard book to talk about. And a lot of my notes about this book have naughty words in them. I used all my grown up words while reading this. I was often disgusted or infuriated by what I read in these pages. There are trigger warnings here for sexual abuse and gross misconduct by those in power. This isn't a book to read, when you're like, Well, I really want to like, re discover my faith and get all my gooey back in the church. No, no, that's not what this says. It's not what happens here. It will fire you up, especially with a long range view of the ways the church has changed over time. It also struck quite a few similar notes to Mediocre by Ijeoma Oluo, which I read in April of 2021. That was where I first learned about rugged, masculine Christianity. And this book dives much deeper into it than I expected. Over and over again, I saw reviews that rated this book five stars, and also talked about being really glad that they were all done reading it, because of the way that they were enraged throughout. The audiobook narration was a bit robotic at times. So I was really glad to have the paper copy with my buddy reader Katie's handwritten notes in the margins, because I felt like she was empathizing with me in her previous read of this book, to maintain my focus on the facts and all the reporting that she does here in this would benefit from a slow but steady read or a tandem read like I did in order to really absorb the information. That way you don't feel like you have to go back and reread because you don't want to do that. It's really rough. This is Jesus and John Wayne by Kristin Kobes Du Mez.

Kaytee Cobb 18:54

So did you feel like you learned anything that you didn't know before? Or did all it serve to do was be to make you more angry? And I am asking because I myself, I have it. It's on my shelf and I've danced around it too. So I'm right. I'm really coming at it from a place of curiosity.

Kaytee Cobb 19:45

It definitely felt less like, well, then this crazy thing happened in 2016. And nobody saw it coming. It felt like it laid a lot of groundwork for what we saw happen and it made a lot more sense, even though I didn't like it. Yeah, it makes sense.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 20:00

Yeah, right explained more how we've arrived where where we've arrived. Gotcha. Okay. All right. All right. Well, my next book is completely different from my first one. And we contain multitudes and this is an example of that this I want to talk about a book that I really loved called A Week in Winter by Marcia Willett. So here's the setup. We love all of us love a story that centers on a great house right? Moorgate, the house at the center of A Week in Winter is a light and fresh air filled old farmhouse on

the edge of a more in Cornwall. As of now the house belongs to our lead character, 70 Something Maudie Todhunter the late Lord Todhunter's free spirited second wife. After her husband's death Maudie decides to sell Moorgate. She loves the house, but needs must, and all kinds of old family vendettas and bitterness is and secrets come to light. And so our story begins. There's fraught relationships between Maudie and her stepchildren, interesting, older female friendships, and a lovely step granddaughter who adores Maudie and gives us hope in humanity. And again, there's more gait which is a character in and of itself, and we all want to own it. I will say again, here that the blurb on Amazon goes on for three additional paragraphs giving you nearly all of the story and I just again have to ask who is writing? Who is writing these blurbs? You know what you need to know. This book was recommended by a listener in our most recent listener press episode where Kaytee and I get so many of our favorite books that we add to our TBR and as soon as I heard about A Week in Winter, I knew that I had to read it because I had just finished Shell Seekers by Rosemund Pilcher and the reader who was recommending A Week in Winter mentioned that it was perfect for fans of Pilcher and so I immediately put it on my TBR. And I would say that there is no question that this book is a great read alike. It's not exactly the same as Pilcher's writing. Willett's writing is not as lyrical, but it is solid prose and the plotline absolutely cracks along. Also, where pictures plot plots are a bit slower and more prosaic. We have a bit more of what I would describe as Soap Opera Drama happening in this book. There's lots of high emotion and big arguments happening. Now, don't get me wrong, I enjoyed it all the way through. And I don't mean any of that to be negative. I just want to say that there are distinct differences between Willett and Pilcher's writing, you just need to know that before you go in. But what I did find to be the same in the most delightful way is that this book, like Rosamund Pilcher's writing is a balm when I needed a comfort book. It just put me in that calm, comforting headspace. I loved sinking into the pages of the story and finding myself in Cornwall or on the Moors of England. And the winter setting at this time of year is unmatched. There's a large cast of characters. And that is something that I really enjoy in these kinds of books. There's lots of drama, and lots of juicy gossip and lots of exciting big decisions being made by different members of our cast. And all of this work together just perfectly to keep me distracted during an especially cold week of winter. From a personal point of view, this novel resonated with me deeply because of its focus on the step parent relationship. You don't see a lot of that in literature, and I appreciated the warts and all portrayal. I'm a stepmom myself, and I know that these relationships are complicated. They are wonderful. And also, it's hard to be a stepmom in ways that parenting your own biological children is not hard. And we see that play out in this book. It's writ large here, much more dramatic than anything I've ever had to go through with my adult stepson to I'm actually quite close to. But I felt very seen in this part of the plot, it was dealt with really well. So if that sounds good to you pick it up, or at least grab a copy and put it on your TBR for when you're in one of those moods where you just can't find a safe space in your brain. This book will give you a little hug and other people's drama to think about to take you away from your own problems. I loved this one. It's A Week in Winter by Marcia Willett.

Kaytee Cobb 24:38

I remember that listener press and how we were just enamored with I think his name was Michael, although if I'm wrong, please come back and tell us. Yes. And the way he set it up in the way he sold this book to us. We were both like, I want to be friends with Michael and I want to read that book.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 24:52

I know exactly. Exactly. I knew from the moment I heard him talk about it that I wanted to read it.

Kaytee Cobb 24:57

Oh, that sounds so good. I'm glad it was the perfect time to settle into that story too. Okay, my third book this week is *The School for Good and Evil* by Soman Chainani. This is a case of I bought this book for my child for Christmas, and then we both had to read it. So Micah had this book under the Christmas tree this year, and he tore through it within just a few days after the holiday. He then sat down to watch the new Netflix movie and I was in the same room with him. I believe I was prepping for an episode while he watched. I was intrigued enough seeing just glimpses of this movie that I decided to pick it up for myself to see what was inside the book. Sophie and Agatha are our main characters. They live in the village of Gabaldon, where two children are stolen from a village every year. Always two. Sometimes boys, sometimes girls sometimes a mix, but they're always opposite in some way. One is beautiful and kind and lovely and the other one is hard and outcast and unattractive. This year, Sophie and Agatha get to find out where they go. Best friends for life, Sophie has always dreamed of being the good girl that gets kidnapped. She wears pink. She loves makeup, and she tries to be kind to everyone she meets. Agatha loves black frumpy dresses and is annoyed by nearly everyone. But when they are picked up by a giant flying beast, Sophie is dropped at the school for evil, where she has to learn to be a henchman learn curses and take potion classes. Meanwhile, Agatha takes etiquette classes in pink dresses, with handsome princes and beautiful girls all around here. There must be some mistake, right? I love a great story about a magical boarding school, which is why I've brought two of them in the past two weeks. This novel was released in 2013 and was basically begging for a TV or movie adaptation. So I'm glad it finally happened by being brought to Netflix this year. What I didn't love although I do understand it is the continued insistence on fairy tales of all kinds that beauty equals goodness and evil equals ugliness. This book attempts to speak to that narrative a little bit and flip it on its head, but not without first really pounding it into the reader reinforcing those stereotypes regarding pink and black, Aqua line noses and warts, blonde hair and blue eyes versus brown and black hair and eyes. Sophia is beautiful. So she must be good, right? There must be a mistake. And Agatha doesn't even like makeup. I can't be a good person if I don't like makeup. That's what it feels like this book is saying, obviously, there must be something wrong with her. I think this would have been far more interesting and boundary pushing if the girls were twins, if they outwardly presented nearly exactly the same so that what really mattered was on the inside their internal struggles, their internal beliefs and narrative. And I think our kids deserve stories like that they can handle more nuanced, they can handle it being elevated more than some authors give them credit for this book is the first in a long series with six full length novels so far, one published prequel and another prequel expected later this year. So if you're into that magical school fantasy series genre, there's plenty where this came from. All that being said, part of what drew me into this book, and part of why I brought it to the show this week is the screen adaptation. Which brings me to a fun announcement. Meredith, you told us a few weeks ago about your new project with Roxana and we have gotten so many excited messages and emails from readers that cannot wait to join you both on *A Journey to Three Pines*. It has been amazing. I love it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:38

Yes, so excited about it.

Kaytee Cobb 28:40

Yes, we are all excited everybody at Currently Reading. I am also taking on a small side project for the opposing months. It's called Popcorn in the Pages. And I've roped my lifelong bestie Shad into joining me for a series of episodes where we will read a novel watch the movie or TV adaptation of it and discuss them both. Every time we have an episode, we will let our listeners know the next book to screen pairing so that you can read and watch right along with us. And it will be a bonus episode right here in the main Currently Reading feed. This episode will be full of snark and silliness and ridiculousness and we can't wait to explore it with you and our first episode which should be ready sometime in March we will read and watch the Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins which is one of my favorite book to movie adaptations to inaugurate the series. Like I mentioned at the top there will also be a Fable Popcorn in the Pages buddy read group in order to read along with your fellow readers and discuss over there. I'm so excited I cannot wait to hear if you guys liked this idea or not. Let us know.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 29:48

Oh I think they're gonna love this idea. I think Popcorn in the Pages is going to be so much fun because like we do everything with Currently Reading, you guys are gonna have a format that you stick to which makes it really listenable, I think you're not just going to be rant... you know, randomly rambling, it's going to have a real purpose. And I know you guys are going to make it very bookish. And I just think you and Shad are going to be fantastic. I can't wait to listen. It's going to be so much fun.

Kaytee Cobb 30:14

I'm very excited to and I will let everybody know that even though Shad and I have been friends for 27 years at this point, I was nervous to ask him if he wanted to be on the show with me because I wasn't sure if he was gonna be like, podcasting is for you. Not for me. But he jumped at the chance and he's thrilled that you guys will get to meet him soon.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 30:33

Oh, yeah, that's gonna be awesome. I'm so glad that you guys are doing that, Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 30:36

Awesome. Okay, so this was the School for Good and Evil by Soman Chainani.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 30:41

All right. My third book is a book that is going to be coming out March 7, which I realized is about a month from now but I purposely am bringing it to you this week because I think it's going to be really popular and I really want you guys to get your pre orders. I want you to get your holds in to the library right now. This book is The Golden Spoon by Jessa Maxwell. Kaytee, have you seen this one?

Kaytee Cobb 31:04

I heard about it on our friend Holly and Devon, their podcast Hearts and Daggers. They talked about this one.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 31:10

Yes. I think this one is going to be one that so many people love. So here's the setup. Every summer for the past 10 years, six amateur bakers have descended on the grounds of Grafton, the leafy Vermont estate that is not only the filming site for Bake Week, which is their big show, but also the childhood home of the show's famous host, the baker, Betsy Martin. Good old Betsy is the author of so many best selling cookbooks and she is known as America's grandmother. But not unexpectedly, Ms. Martin isn't as warm off screen as she is on though. She goes to great lengths to keep that information from becoming public. Bake Week is Betty's absolute pride and joy and she is very invested in everything being exactly as it's always been completely perfect. But something is definitely wrong from the very beginning. As the baking competition gets started, weird things begin to go wrong. At first, it's just like sabotage stuff like sugar replaced with salt or a burner turned off when it should have been on. But then someone gets murdered. And every one of these sweet things is a suspect.

Kaytee Cobb 32:30

I am so excited about those.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 32:32

Right. So if my first book was exciting, and my second book was comforting, this book is fun. This is delightful mystery fun. This will thrill all of our fans of classic mystery stories. It's the perfect marriage of of course, The Great British Baking Show mixed with Knives Out the first movie, and Clue. It isn't silly, but it doesn't take itself too seriously. It's just fun. I could almost feel how much fun debut author Jessa Maxwell was having crafting her story. And that makes it fun for us to read. I loved the first person points of view of each of the contestants. Their backstories were well done and they were well played all the way through. Now, this is not what I would at all consider a character driven novel. But we do get well drawn characters here. We understand their motivations as the story sings along and that makes the resolution makes so much sense. And the food well the baked goods, my Lord there were delicious descriptions of breads, cakes, pies, cinnamon rolls, I found myself adding ingredients to my shopping cart and Googling great recipes as I read. I found myself wishing this book would include recipes, you know, like some of the cozy mysteries still, but I think they would be probably trying not to get that kind of cozy implication in this book. Because this isn't a cozy. This is a locked room mystery where family secrets abound. There are hidden staircases, secret documents, and most definitely hidden motives. But it's not a story where everyone is suspicious, not even close. And I loved that piece of it. There were plenty of good people who were exactly what they seemed and I was rooting for them all the way through. This has that Knives Out feel because it's fun and it just doesn't take it too seriously. bonus is that it's a fast read with super short chapters and a satisfying ending. I loved it. And I think many of you will too. This is The Golden Spoon by Jessa Maxwell. If you like the Great British baking, like if you like the show, get you to this book because it gives you all sorts of behind the scenes kinds of kinds of feels like what really happens when they're not in the tent. It's fascinating. All right, Kaytee. So those are our current reads. Let's talk a little bit about our deep dive today which is a question that we get asked a lot, both in our personal lives, and then also from people who are emailing us or DMing us. What are the perks and what are the difficulties, what are the downsides of having reading be your job? And Kaytee, I'm sure people have said to you, Well, I would never want to do what you do, because I don't want to take something that I enjoy and make it into my job. And you know what, there's a really good reason that people say that. I mean, they have a point.

Kaytee Cobb 35:27

For sure. They do for sure. I feel like because I spend so much time with readers, mostly, they're saying, How do I get paid to read? What kind of brilliant job is this where you can, you know, get paid or, or say, This is my work and just go sit in a corner and read by yourself? Because that's pretty awesome.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 35:46

Okay, so what's your answer to that? Because I know I haven't. I have an answer when people ask me that or say that to me.

Kaytee Cobb 35:52

The first answer is that we certainly never thought we were gonna get paid to do this.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 35:56

And that's the thing. That's the key right there. So I love side hustles. Right, one of the things I do is I actually counsel a lot of different people on their side hustle, whether they're trying to make money with it, or just use it as a stone sharpening kind of activity to make the rest of their their lives better. And the first thing that I will often say is, if it is your hobby, be very, very careful, because you don't want to trade your love of this thing for dollars. And that and we literally, it's hard to think back to 2018 when we started this because back then, very few podcasts had like out paid elements to them. I feel like now every podcast, like they put out six episodes, and they're starting a Patreon, which, you know, go with God. But I feel like that is legitimately not what we were doing. We were just happy we had 100 listeners to start.

Kaytee Cobb 36:51

Absolutely. And and we weren't worried about that forward looking idea of well, how are we going to turn this into a moneymaker someday? How are we going to recoup these costs? We were like, well, maybe we'll make some Amazon affiliate link income, which we don't even use anymore. And we'll get to buy books with it. And that would be pretty great, wouldn't it?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:14

Right, exactly. So I think so not only was that how it rolled out for us, but I think that that's the really important thing is that to think how do I get paid to read books? I don't think you really want to get paid to read books. Honestly, I think that would ruin the love of books. I think what you what we've been lucky enough to do is to monetize the love of talking right about what we read. So I think it's that separate element that has kept it from ruining our love of reading,

Kaytee Cobb 37:46

Feeling onerous. Yeah. Feeling like this huge burden that you have, you must read or you will not make any money. Right? Because right where it gets squishy. That's where it gets yucky.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:57

Right? Right, exactly. Okay. So Kaytee to you, what are the like, what are the top two upsides about having reading be your your job part of your job?

Kaytee Cobb 38:08

Okay, easily my two upsides are that I can buy books and write them off as part of what we're doing here on the podcast. And that means that money that I would have spent anyways is now part of my business expenses, which has its own perks. Of course, owning your own business has perks and sometimes it also means that I get to tell my people that I'm working. And usually when I deploy that excuse, it means that I'm either working on shownotes, or doing show prep or something to that effect, but sometimes it means I need to sit here and read, please leave me alone. This is my job. And it has a different gravitas to it than saying Mommy wants to read please stop being annoying. Because that, like Yes, Yes, Mama, please do that. Please show your children that reading is important to you. But there is a different level to being able to say to my husband or my kids. This is important. It is part of my job. It is part of the income that I bring into our family that I get this time for me to do this thing. So it's those two things. It's getting to write off books, and it's getting to use reading as work and say I need this time for me.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:29

Absolutely. I totally agree with you on those two. Also, I love the fact that because of what we do, we're now well I mean for me personally, Currently Reading is that stone sharpener, and it makes me better at my day job because it is so different from what I do in my day job although there are some similarities now especially as we've grown, but it was something to do that like I could stay fresher at Here Comes the Guide. If I have something outside of Here Comes the Guide I don't know what that says about my personality. But it's always been true back when I had Penelope's Lists, it was the same kind of thing like I need, I need something else to kind of work together. And it makes me better at my job. So there's that element of it, but also because of what we do, and because people know what it is that I do, people are more apt to come to me. I've become like the book person in their life, right? Like, I know this person, she has a book podcast. So they come to me for book recommendations. And I love that, like, I love giving people bespoke book recommendations it is, so it brings me so much joy. So that is something that is really fun for me. And also, you know, we get practically any book that we want our NetGalley, which is a huge perk. We get advance listener copies on Libro.FM, which is a huge perk.

Kaytee Cobb 40:56

We get to buy five books a month from every indie bookstore for each of us when writing the press list.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 41:02

Exactly. Right. Exactly. And so and that's something that we pay, you know, we pay for, but you know, those other things are perks that we get from, you know, just kind of having a platform. And there are definitely perks to that, for sure. So, let's talk a little bit about the downsides. Kaytee what, what are your downsides? What came to you first?

Kaytee Cobb 41:24

For me, it's mostly about the type of reading that I do. Even if I were a really avid series reader, knowing that I will be bringing books to the show and that I can't spend an entire month reading 20 books in the Louise Penny series does have a downside, or I can't spend one month just reading all of Outlander right? Because it would take at least a month to read all of those chunky books, because then I would have nothing to talk about. And I can't just be like, well, for my third read today, I have book three in the Outlander series. Aren't you excited to hear a third one already today? Because there has to be some kind of variety every week. Is that? Is that a downside? Yes, it is. It also means that for the past two years, while I spent time reading short stories with the short story sisters, I knew that that reading was not going to come on to the show. I could bring maybe the cream of the crop once or twice a year. But I couldn't every month be saying let me tell you about another short story collection that I found mediocre, because nobody wants to hear mediocre book after mediocre book. Right? This one had upsides and downsides. Yeah, of course it did. Kaytee, so did every other short story collection you read? Why are you still telling us about it? So it does affect what I'm willing to commit my reading time to. What about you?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 42:41

I mean, I would say that, so the element of time looms large in my life, just in general, this element of just never there are never enough hours in the day. That's not because of the podcasts. It's just because of exactly what I said, like, oh, I by the way, I like to have two jobs at once. So right, this is what this is, you know, what happens? This is foreseeable Meredith. So fitting everything in is always a challenge. But it's a challenge that I'm up to, it definitely means that I don't have the ability to pursue a lot of other hobbies. But that's okay with me. Because doing what we do, we don't just read. We also think about content, we think about marketing, we think about, you know, we're creative in a lot of different ways.

Kaytee Cobb 43:26

The community we spend a lot of time with.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:28

Exactly, exactly. So there's an element of I, you know, I there aren't enough hours in the day. Also kind of, for me, the flip side of what you're talking about, as you guys will know, everything that I read, almost everything makes it to the show, because I only have enough time to read to keep up with the show. So that means that sometimes I'm bringing a mediocre book that otherwise that would be like, you know, what is interesting about me talking about this mediocre popcorn thriller. So it comes to the show, which I think a lot about. And then sometimes it really informs what I choose to read because I'm like, I don't I feel like reading a popcorn thriller. But is that really what people want to hear me talk about? So that push pull a bit again, this far in we found ways to manage all of these things. So it's not really a Oh, woe is me. You guys should feel this is not about us feeling sorry for us in any way, shape or form. But I do think that when you when you think about a side hustle, or and by that again, I mean something that you're spending time on whether it makes money or it doesn't. You really have to think about okay, what are the upsides going to be but what are the downsides going to be and that is something that you know, this experience of having this podcast has definitely brought home to me is that sometimes there are big downsides and that you have to really work through and then luckily we've been able to work

through those and just kind of keep keep soldiering on and and also be a Will to continue. And I think this would be kind of my final downside is that we can't just do the exact same thing forever, we have to always be iterating. Otherwise, it's just gonna get boring for us, it's gonna get boring for everybody. So that's why we're doing things like bringing journey to three pints or popcorn in the pages or adding new things to Patreon. All of those things, you know, are about us continuing to bring new and fresh energy to the show so that we aren't just becoming stale.

Kaytee Cobb 45:34

Right. Absolutely, yes. And those are almost like a lot of those little spin off and pivot projects are like, the side hustles to this side hustle, right? Yeah. Where we continue to use those avenues in order to sharpen the saw that is Currently Reading. Whereas Currently Reading is what sharpens your saw, that is Here Comes the Guide, right? So there's a there's a cascade of sharpening happening, which is great. I also want to circle back one more time here to to what you said right at the top of that, which is that reading is not our job here at Currently Reading. Talking about books is our job. And I'll tell you what, I cannot imagine a better job, the fact that I get to spend time and energy talking to someone I adore, and respect and look up to every week about what we've been reading, and then have these insightful conversations where we illuminate something for each other. And then readers come back and say, That was amazing. I loved such and such aspect of it. And there's an interactive component. That's the job. And that is the best job. It's so great to say I get to talk about books, which is something I adore. And it's my favorite hobby as my job. I mean, there's there's really no downside. Right, really, it's fantastic.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:50

Right. Absolutely. It's, it's and that is the important distinction. Because that, you know, that is the piece of it that makes it different and makes it really, really fun. I actually wouldn't want to be like an editor or, you know, I wouldn't, I wouldn't, I wouldn't want to have to plow through, you know, 20 books by the end of the month to figure out which ones are good and which aren't like, that just feels really exhausting to me. But being able to choose my own books, and then talk about them with you is yeah, it's just a lot of fun. So, so yes, little peek behind the scenes from us. And, you know, the upsides and downsides of of doing this, but more than anything, we you know, we love it, and we love it, because all you guys, you know, you come and you listen every week and that that is such a gift to us. Okay, Kaytee, let's round this out with some wishes at the fountain. What's your wish this week?

Kaytee Cobb 47:41

Okay, this week, I am a library enabler. So this week, I wish to share the library extension with all of you. This is a magical tool. Meredith, do you have this on your computer?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:53

I absolutely do. I love it.

Kaytee Cobb 47:55

Because we know what the right answer is here. Hat tip to bookish friend Tiffany who regularly tells our group to install this chrome extension. Now it's time for all of you to know about this. You add this extension to Google Chrome and then set it up by telling it about your libraries that you have access to.

You can include their physical collections, or just digital collections separately, in case you use one subset of items are the other. Then when you go to book buying sites like Barnes and Noble, Storygraph, Goodreads, Amazon, bookshop.org, any of these places where you might be adding things to your TBR or considering purchasing, it will pop up a textbox linked directly to all your libraries of choice that says whether they have copies and if they are available. So this extension is working for you helping you decide if it's worth clicking buy, or if you might be better served by your amazing Public Library system. If you're searching through an indie bookstore site, it probably is not going to work there. I checked a few of our favorites this month to make sure that I was giving the right information here. But any of those larger companies, this extension may just help you bookworm, save your wallet from yourself, which is all of us know, sometimes a big problem, right? So you could search for let's say, The Golden Spoon by Jessa Maxwell and pull it up on Amazon as a pre order and it will tell you if your library's already have copies coming in. So you know if you can get on that hold list, or if it's better to just click Buy now. It's fantastic. I love it so much. And I hope you all install it and that you love it too. It's the library extension for Google Chrome.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:34

Yes, that is indispensable. I use that all the time. That's really, really helpful. Although in my library, if like right now a month out, they probably haven't placed an order like they seem to place orders closer to time. And so I would email. So my library has a function where I can email them and say like, Hey, this book is coming out can I get on the list and then not only will they order it, but I will be the first one to get it. So try that. Try that trick too. But okay, so my wish is this. I was listening to The Popcast this week, of course, you guys know, it's my favorite podcast. They did The Nos of Books. So I love it when Knox and Jamie talk about books. One of their listeners wrote in saying, wouldn't it be great if in romances, if the spicy parts were delineated in like red text? So like, the love scenes, right? So like the scenes, they would be in red text, or they'd be delineated visually in some way,

Kaytee Cobb 50:38

text that's like the Bible? Well, okay,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 50:40

and I know, and so let's, let's, that's what the listener said, let's say, green text. Let's see, it's green, right? Green is our color. So right? So the pages are delineated in some way, because this woman's point was, for a lot of us, we those are the sections we kind of want to go to, or come back to, or come back to, or, for a lot of readers, they might want to read the book, but they want to know when they can skip through because they don't want to read that. And so I thought, wouldn't, isn't that the most genius idea that you would delineate those things in some in some way? Not with red text, let's stick to green. And I just think, I wish that romances would do this. I think it's a genius idea. My mind was blown. So that is my wish. Ping splash. Alright, that is it for this week. As reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me I'm Meredith at @Meredith.reads on Instagram.

Kaytee Cobb 51:43

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 51:47

Full show notes with the title of every book we mentioned in the episode and timestamps, so you can zoom right to where we talked about it can be found on our website at currentlyreadingpodcast.com.

Kaytee Cobb 51:57

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:04

And if you want more of this kind of content, you can join us as a bookish friend for just \$5 a month on Patreon. You can also rate and review us on Apple podcasts and shout us out on social media. Every one of those things makes a huge difference in our finding our perfect audience.

Kaytee Cobb 52:19

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:25

Alright, until next week, may your coffee be hot

Kaytee Cobb 52:27

and your book be unputdownable.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:29

Happy reading Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 52:30

Happy reading Meredith.