



Season 5, Episode 3: Hold Onto Your Butts + Secret Pleasure Reads

Mon, 8/15 • 56:25

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 will visit the fountain.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:34

I'm Meredith Monday Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas, and I am happy that I've been using books in a different way lately.

Kaytee Cobb 00:43

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico, and I'm not great at DNFing, but I'm working on it. This is episode number three of season five. And we are so glad you're here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:54

Kaytee, why is DNFing so hard? We know we should do it. But why is it a struggle? I hate it.

Kaytee Cobb 01:03

We do struggle? Yeah, it's a, it's a work in progress. We'll see what happens.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:08

Right, right. Okay. All right. Well, hopefully we'll hear a little bit more about that. So we are gonna let you know that our deep dive this week is answering a question that we have gotten from a couple of different listeners over the course of time, which is "Meredith and Kaytee, are there any books that you consider terrible, but are your secret pleasure?" Kaytee, I'm looking forward to deep diving into this a little bit.

Kaytee Cobb 01:32

I have a lot of feels. I don't have a lot of thoughts, but I have a lot of feels about this deep dive.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:37

Okay. All right, good. Excellent. Okay, so let's start out the way we always do with our bookish moments of the week. Kaytee, what have you got?

Kaytee Cobb 01:46

Okay, my bookish moment this week, it does have to do with my bite size intro. I was working on my reading logs spreadsheet, because we just turned the month, and I realized as I was inputting the data, that I had three DNF books in a row last month, which is a far and away record for me. For perspective, I've only DNFd eight books this year, but three of them were in July, all in a row. One of them was a "not right now" book for me, one I thought was just completely idiotic, and one I read a significant portion of with a buddy, and then we both decided we did not want to continue and that's a really different situation than I'm used to. So I'm using this virtual, this bookish moment to encourage others who have a hard time setting down a book, which is a lot of us, like we get posts all the time in the group, "I'm made it to 75% and I'm still not interested. Is it time for me to set it down?"

Meredith Monday Schwartz 02:38

And oh, my god, I hate those posts. I hate those posts. Kaytee, I hate them. "I'm 20% in and I'm really not into it. What should I do?" It makes me want to throttle people. Oh, no, it does.

Kaytee Cobb 02:50

We're not advocating violence. But do throw your book or or set it down.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 02:54

You could just set it down. Set it down. Set it down without asking everyone about it. How about that?

Kaytee Cobb 03:00

That's also a possibility that the the answer is not in your navel or on the internet.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:05

Right? I don't have the answer as to whether or not you're going to find the back half of that book more interesting than the front half.

Kaytee Cobb 03:13

No, probably not. I don't think it's anywhere in Meredith's brain wether so it's so is gonna like this book more later on. But I'm like, I wanted to give myself a little pat on the back Because I'm proud of myself for saying all three of these books are not working, it's time to clean the slate, set them all down, walk away and do something different. And it felt good. And I want to encourage anybody else that has a hard time because we do we have hard time, for whatever reason, investing some time in a book and then saying, actually, this is not the book for me for whatever reason. So encouragement, go ahead and set it down. You don't have to ask anybody else for permission. You can just do it and be glad you did.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:56

And I think Kaytee, Yes. 100% I agree with you. I think for me, it's the it's the time leading up to the moment of doing it. The moment where I actually take my bookmark out, put it in where at whatever pile

depending on not right now or this book, is it whatever it is, it's the moments leading up to that. It's the, it's the decision making moments that are what makes my stomach turn, you know what I mean? Especially on audio. Why is it that audiobooks are so hard for me to DNF but I am most likely to get stuck behind an audio book that I shouldn't be enough because I'm just not in the right mood or it's not the right book for me. But I am slower to DNF on audio.

Kaytee Cobb 04:42

That's really interesting. I will either DNF right away on audio, or I will just power through and listen I will crank it up as fast as my ears can comprehend even every third sentence and be like whatever I finished it, I hated it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:55

Right? Exactly. And I think because I don't want to do that. Um, you know, but in a print book, I'm much more likely to do the equivalent of that. Like, I really will. Yeah. Right, especially in a mystery or thriller that I know I'm not going to revisit later. And, you know, so that kind of thing is easier for me in print. But it's a really good point. And I'm glad that that we are saying once again, DNF when when you need to, because we need every single time I go through either a slump, or two or three DNFs in a row, the next book or couple of books will be really big hits for me. So again, it's clearing the chakras out, but it's not easy.

Kaytee Cobb 05:32

Sure isn't. What's your way that you're reading differently Meredith? I'm intrigued.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 05:38

Right. So I am telling you guys this, because I actually didn't think it was anything that interesting. But I told Roxana about it and she was like, "Oh, my gosh, this is the best idea. I never thought about it before." Okay, so, so two things came together. I have a dining, formal dining room with a big formal dining room table that I don't use a lot for other stuff. So I'm always like, it's a beautiful room. And it's got great natural light. And I'm always like, why I need to use this room better. So one thing that I started doing was kind of other than Christmas time where the table's decorated for Christmas, the rest of the year, I'll usually have some sort of puzzle going there. And I've really found that if I do that, I am more likely to fiddle around on the puzzle, even Johnny and Jackson will do it sometimes. But here's the thing. I asked my brother who's one of my favorite people in the world for an atlas for my birthday, which is, which is by the time the airs it will have passed. And I've always wanted like a really big formal Atlas, like not just the kind that you would buy in Barnes and Noble, but like a really big thing. Right? Okay. And he bought me the most beautiful, huge, it weighs like 50 pounds. I mean, this is huge. And it's really big, like I'm showing you with my arms really big, like, it almost feels like I almost can't carry it by my like, it's really, really, really big and heavy. And it's from The Times London, it's The Times London Atlas of the World. And this book is not messing around. If you want to see a map of anything, it's in this book, it's beautiful. It's exactly what I wanted. But I said to myself, well, I don't really want to just kind of go go over it and then put it away. So I opened it up on the dining, on the other part of the dining room table. And now, I'm so much more likely to say I have like three minutes before a meeting. So I'll often have like a two minute period of time before I have to go into meeting, I'll just like shuffle through the pages a little bit, or Jackson will scoot up there and page through. I just liked the idea

whether it's coffee table book, you know, a reference book of any kind. And I feel like if we put it out somewhere, we're more likely to interact with it. And so I told Roxanna, that idea about the puzzle and about kind of getting a big book out like that. And she's done the same thing and had a really, really good response, or had it, had it work really well in her home. And so anyway, I just that it's been a really fun way to spend this week, just looking through maps. I'm really obsessed with Switzerland, I want to go to Switzerland in this next year. And actually one of our bookish friends, our bookish friend Gaye is so sweet. And she's helping me kind of figure out where we should go in Switzerland, because she just did this trip. And so I immediately turned to Switzerland and France and the Swiss Alps, and got really into the maps there. So it's just been so much fun.

Kaytee Cobb 08:30

I love that. My mom has the full OED, the Oxford English Dictionary, the huge version where you have to use, it's almost like a small globe or a half globe, magnifying glass to read it because the text is so small, but the book itself is like six inches thick. And she likes it on her formal dining in her formal dining area, because it's not getting used that much. But you can go in there and you could find whatever word you want. And look at the derivatives. And it's just such a fun way to be like, you know, we could just go look around in there, like poke around in the English language, doesn't that sound fun?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:07

Right, so So then from there, what other kinds of books are we maybe not investing in because we're worried about that exact thing? Well, I'll buy it, and then what am I going to do with it? But are there books where you're like, you kind of look at it when you're at Barnes and Noble. You're in one of these big, gorgeous, independent bookstores. Maybe now we have something we can actually do with it, put it out someplace where you and your entire family can noodle through it every once in a while.

Kaytee Cobb 09:32

I love it. I think that's such a great idea. Now everybody's going to start thinking about what they could put there.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:38

Right, exactly. All right. And we want to know if you do that, please put a post up because we want to know about that. Okay, Kaytee, let's talk about our current reads. What's your first current read?

Kaytee Cobb 09:47

Okay, my first current read makes me giggle a little bit, partly because I'm pretty sure Meredith that you would hate it, And partly because I have a watch alike for it, that is not okay. So I'm going to talk about Perfect on Paper by Sophie Gonzales. This book was so YA, which is why you would hate it, but I super loved. So our main character is Darcy. She is bisexual and her love life is a wreck. She's secretly in love with her best friend Brooke, who's maybe falling for someone else. She has a pulse on everything that's happening at her high school. And that's because she secretly runs locker 89. She even has its own email address locker89@gmail.com. It's an unassigned locker that she has the combination to because her mom is part of the administration at the school. Her schoolmates leave notes there anonymously. They slip them in through the vent holes to get relationship advice from Darcy. She's so good at what she does, that she even offers a money back guarantee on her services. If you ask her to

improve your relationship and her advice doesn't work, she'll get your dollars back to you anonymously and she has never had to give refunds. All of this is going swimmingly until school hottie and also annoying dude, Alexander Brougham catches her emptying the locker after school one day, so all of a sudden...

Meredith Monday Schwartz 11:09

Yeah, I was wondering how do you, what's the what's the mechanism there

Kaytee Cobb 11:13

What's the catch. Exactly. He enlists her help to get his girlfriend back after they broke up, personalized advice in person and paying much more than her usual fee. In exchange, he won't reveal her secret, which is a good thing, because if people find out that Darcy is the one behind locker 89, they might put together that she's been messing with people's love lives in somewhat nefarious ways, especially the aforementioned bestie Brooke. You can probably guess where this book is going to go with all the moving parts already. But I didn't say this was a thriller. It's okay if you know what's going to happen. It's a YA rom com. It's angsty and predictable and all the best ways. I picked it up after seeing it on Anne Bogel's daily Kindle deal email. I don't buy Kindle deals, but I like to look at those emails because they're always backlist picks. Everything that goes on sale on Kindle is a backlist pick. So it lets me think through Oh, well, that passed me by a few years ago. It's kind of like when you talked about Meredith, that sometimes you listen to all the books a full year later. Yeah. Because if those books are still interesting to you, then maybe it's time to pick them up, right? Yep. So just a week or two ago, my husband and I started watching Sex Education on Netflix, which was recommended to me by numerous people. This book is like the chaste version of that show. I'd absolutely hand Perfect on Paper to a 14 year old. And I wouldn't even watch Sex Education with someone over 30 that I wasn't married to. Because it's that kind of show. Unless I knew them really well. Although, can I just point out that the cast is fabulous. And if you'd like Derry Girls and the humor there, this is equally fantastic. Back to Perfect on Paper, I thought it was really cute and fun. I listened to the audio in a single day, and I was really glad to have bisexual rep on the page. And the conversations around bi erasure in the in the book within the queer and questioning club were really interesting to me. Fiction is such a great way to better comprehend stuff that we haven't encountered before in our actual lives. You know, I was really glad I read it and grateful to Anne for putting it on my radar. This was Perfect on Paper by Sophie Gonzales.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 13:19

That sounds really good. But what is bi erasure?

Kaytee Cobb 13:22

So bi erasure is that anyone who identifies as bisexual, if they are with a woman, they're kind of just considered a lesbian. If they are with a man, they're just considered heterosexual. And they kind of, part of their identity becomes erased once they've picked a partner to be with, even though they do identify as bisexual. So yeah, that's the concept behind bi erasure.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 13:47

Okay, good. And so then that definitely helps me understand why you would be glad to see it in this book, because that would help me to understand how that actually works in real life. So that makes

sense. Right. All right, good. Well, that does sound like a good one. Okay, my first one was also a really, really good one. I absolutely loved it. This is one that I've already talked about on All Things Murderful because I literally had just finished it and I had this was over the summer, and I had to immediately talk about it. But now I want to bring it to the big show because if you like mysteries, especially literary mysteries, this is definitely going to be for you. This is *The Lamplighters* by Emma Stonex. Now remind me Kaytee have you read this one?

Kaytee Cobb 14:30

No, but I just bought it a couple days ago.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 14:33

Okay. All right. So here is the setup. First of all, I was fascinated to learn that this novel is actually inspired by a true story. It's New Year's Eve in 1972, when a boat pulls up to the Maidan Rock Lighthouse with supplies and relief for the lightkeepers who have been there for months. But no one greets the boat which is very out of the ordinary. They're usually extraordinarily interested in this boat coming right because this is like new people for the first time in months. The entrance door to the lighthouse is locked from the inside, and when rescuers break in, they find a completely empty tower and things look strange. A table is laid for a meal that has not been eaten. The Principle Keeper's weather log describes the storm raging around the tower, but the skies have been totally clear. And the clocks have all stopped at 8:45pm. Two decades later, the Keeper's wives are visited by a writer who is absolutely dog with a bone to find the truth about the men's disappearance. The novel moves then between the women's stories and the men's last week's together in the lighthouse, and nasty little secret surface and truths twist into lies as we piece together what happened, why and who we can believe. Isn't that a great setup?

Kaytee Cobb 15:57

Interesting. Yeah.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 15:58

And it's based on a true story. So I discovered this, I was buying something else on Blackwell's and I happened to serendipitously run across this book. And I was like, that sounds really interesting. So I grabbed it, and I'm so glad I did. And if you are just starting to map your fall reading, I really, really think that you should have this one on your radar. In the introduction to *All Things Murderful*, I always say that I love talking about books with a puzzle at their center. And this book is such a one. As I said, it's a true literary mystery. It's smart and evocative. It's got that foggy lighthouse, and it takes its time to set its stage. I describe it as the perfect blend of plot and character driven. But you have to have a little bit of patience in the first quarter of the book, let's say. In fact, because of that first quarter of the book, after things started kind of churning along I kept expecting No, this is too good. This is too good. Things are definitely going to slow down and get boring for me again, because it's such a gigantic book, but it's not a super short book. So I was like, This is too good to be true. But I was riveted all the way through. The plot just sang along. Well, it didn't sing along, it hummed along slightly off key and a bit creepy, but absolutely recognizable. It's worth that time that it takes to build up because the carefully executed puzzle is so well done, and it is perfectly resolved. There's messy family stuff and hints of people becoming a bit cracked from the isolation in the lighthouse and also hints of a supernatural force that

may be at play. But what is really happening, we spend the whole story finding out and we do get the entire truth. I wondered if she'd give it to us. I wondered if maybe she'd leave it kind of ambiguous, but we she wraps it all up really well. It was such a satisfying read. If you loved Tim Johnston's *Descent* and *The Current* you will love this one. This is *The Lamplighters* by Emma Stonex.

Kaytee Cobb 18:06

I feel like I don't know why this is but I feel like fall demands lighthouses which is weird because lighthouses are there, you know, year round. It's not like they only open in the fall. But like we had *The Lighthouse Witches* on our Novel Neighbor Indie Press List last year. Yeah. Just those like windswept shores. Yeah. Yeah, I'm totally putting that in the fall. I think that's perfect idea.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 18:32

Right. And there's just enough spookiness in this book. And it's, I mean, it's really it's but it's not, it's not gory. It's not, you know, it's not bloody, it's not violent, any of that stuff. So it's like, it's that great... spooey. It's spooey

Kaytee Cobb 18:49

It's spooey. Yeah, everybody loves that word.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 18:53

Well, it's perfect. It may it's exactly, it's exactly what this book is. If you like spooky reads. And you don't want to be like terrified, but you'd like to be slightly creeped out a little bit, interested the whole way through. This is a book for you. Perfect.

Kaytee Cobb 19:07

I love it. Okay, my second book this week is kind of a follow up because I teased about it in my bookish moment, a few months back at this point. So I'm going to talk about *When Thoughts and Prayers Aren't Enough* by Taylor Schumann. When I asked my Instagram followers if they'd be maybe interested in a buddy read of this book recommended in Jamie Golden's stories after the shooting at Robb Elementary in Uvalde, I did not expect the response that I got. I did not expect to be signing up hundreds of people in groups of 15 to discuss. I did not expect to be sharing close friend stories with hundreds more. It was overwhelming, to say the least. Yeah, but I gave the people what they wanted and we all jumped in together. This book is divided into two parts. The first half deals with Taylor's personal experience of a school shooting. She was working at the reception desk at a college in Virginia when a man entered with a shotgun. She ran to a supply closet and was shot while hiding. There was one other victim. But this shooting was not even big enough to make national news because there were only two victims and neither one died. She had many surgeries, years of occupational and physical therapy, and still has only partial use of her left hand. That entire first half deals with the day of the shooting, the aftermath, including the reactions and support, or lack thereof, of her family and friends, in the ways her life changed from what she had planned and expected. We also get to see the trial of the man who shot her and the ways the criminal justice system works and fails in situations like this. Moving into part two, she goes chapter by chapter into different ways we could tackle gun reform, as well as her own personal journey to become an advocate for gun reform. This part was really interesting to me. She was raised in a pro gun family, she was staunchly pro Second Amendment. And even after her shooting, that

sentiment didn't change overnight, it took years for her to get to the point where she was like, Wait, why do we accept that this is the way things are, why are we willing to trade this freedom for people's lives and livelihoods? She relies heavily on her faith to get through the hardest parts of that recovery. And for some readers of the hundreds that were signed up, that was a really difficult part of this book as sometimes happens in the Christian publishing industry. It felt a lot like this book could have used more editing to tighten the message instead of relying on some pat phrasing and repetition to make her message more palatable to Christian readers. While we were in the process of reading, the bipartisan gun safety bill was passed through both houses of Congress and it felt like we had a little taste of victory. And we had just read chapters about closing the boyfriend loophole and some of the things that were very pointedly included in that gun safety bill. As we wrapped up, so many participants said they felt more comfortable with and better prepared to have difficult conversations with people they know and or love that have a difference of opinions with them. And that was the goal. That was the whole point of this huge buddy read, that we would all come out of it on the other side, having read this book, and feeling like we had really gotten our feet under us as to what changes we should be trying to fight for, and how to protect our friends and neighbors and loved ones. So while I didn't rate the writing of this book super highly, I did rate the practical application much more favorably, and I ended up giving it four stars. I heartily recommend it. And if you're hesitant to pick it up due to the churchiness that I mentioned, you can mostly skim the first half to get a better feel for her experience. The God talk is nearly always towards the end of any chapter and then dive deeper into part two to get a better feel for the practical applications that she gives us. And the ways to have conversations and the encouragement that even a conversation might not change that person right away. But it might move the needle for a future conversation. So overall, I thought it was good. And I'm glad I read it. This was *When Thoughts and Prayers Aren't Enough* by Taylor Schumann.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 23:01

That was such a gargantuan effort that you made to get that buddy read going. I know. I know. That's what she said. And also, I know people were always really, really happy to, or they were really, you know, impacted by, by getting a chance to do that and to read that book together. So it was a lot of work, but it was it was worth it. It was worth it. Okay, my second book is also nonfiction. And it was one that was very worth it for me to read. It's called *Masterminds and Wingmen* by Rosalind Wiseman. Kaytee, I actually think that this is one that will be interesting to you, too. So this is nonfiction. So again, the subtitle says it all: *Helping our Boys Cope with Schoolyard Power, Locker Room Tests, Girlfriends and the New Rules of Boy World*. So this book is by the author, Rosalind Wiseman, of a very popular book about managing girls in middle school in high school called *Queen Bees and Wannabes*. And this book came to me at exactly the right time because Jackson, who is 10, actually tomorrow, he will turn 11, is going into middle school on Wednesday. And so he is getting ready to go into this new, you know, this, this new time of life going into middle school. And I've noticed that the social structure, especially as fifth grade was ending, the social structure, which had been pretty simple for years, has gotten more complicated. And I wanted to be sure that I had the best possible advice for tackling some of the challenges that can come with raising young tween and teenage boys. And that is definitely what I found in this book. It's wise counsel from a mom and a teacher who is exactly the kind of parent that I hope to be. Her advice is straightforward and clear. And she also made me feel super understood even about things that maybe I didn't want to admit to myself. I especially found useable nuggets of advice in the chapters about how to manage popularity in groups, kind of the different levels of it, the chapter

about breaking through the wall of emotional silence that some boys can put up, and how to read the code of their language, but she is what she calls it, which I hadn't really realized was what it was. But she explained it in such way that I just like lightbulb moment. I also really liked the chapter that talks about how you deal with the times that your son screws up, makes big mistakes in the best way possible. So overall, after reading this book, I felt much more prepared to handle the next few years of raising my middle schooler. This is Masterminds and Wingmen by Rosalind Wiseman.

Kaytee Cobb 25:45

Meredith, that sounds incredible. The problem now is I just got NurtureShock in from the library. And now I'm like, Well, how many parenting books can I squeeze into August? Because that seems a little excessive. So right for me right now, which one should I prioritize?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 26:03

I would prioritize NurtureShock, because I think it is more applicable to all four of your kids as opposed to Masterminds and wise, and Wingmen, which I keep wanting to call Wise men to the author's last name, just which would be more something that you would really think about having to do with Micah, and maybe at some point if you guys decide to do a different kind of school instructor, so it's really, it's really, really useful. I found a lot in it that just made me feel more prepared. You guys know, I don't like teenagers, even when they're, they're my own kids. The teenage years are my least favorite by far. Lord, bless the moms who love the teenage years, and there are a lot of them. But I don't. It plays to a lot of my own childhood woundedness, like a lot of the issues that come up in teenager hood. So I don't like that. I don't like things that play to my weaknesses. So you know, we'll just but we do the best we can, right. And I'm always trying to be, I've raised three, three teenagers, I'm always trying to be better.

Kaytee Cobb 26:59

That doesn't surprise me at all that you're always trying to be better. But I think that's a great tool for the rest of us also, to try and get a better handle on what's coming up here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 27:11

You know, I should say that the reason that I wanted to, to read this book, I want to say this, because I feel like this might be something that might cue another reader. One of the things that starts happening in fifth grade with groups of boys is that sometimes, and my brother and I were talking about this, sometimes, the boy who's the biggest douche canoe is also the most popular, right? And I don't think that that's just with boys. But my brother and I were just kind of venting about why is it that our boys who are a little bit more compassionate, a little bit who are not that douche canoe kind of kid are also not the Alpha kids. So they are also not like at the very so then when they are kind of like second or third in that popularity. How does all that play together? I want to say that because that's, that's the real world situation that I was dealing with, that this book really helped me with. And I feel like being that specific might cue another reader. Perfect. Yeah. All right, what's your third book?

Kaytee Cobb 28:05

Okay, my third one is actually also nonfiction. So now that's three in a row. And we just got a tic tac toe, which I'm pretty excited about. I'm going to talk about The Black Friend by Frederick Joseph. I picked this book up at Costco many months ago and I know it was many months ago because I don't have a

membership to Costco because there's no Costco in Santa Fe. And my life is sad because of it. So everybody can be sad with me here for a minute. I have to glom on to others like an amoeba to get my butt in the door when I have the chance. This book has very colorful cover. And that's literally the only reason I picked it up. Frederick Joseph published this book in December of 2020, and had already been named one of Forbes 30 under 30. At that time, he also won the 2018 Bob Clampett Humanitarian Award, and was on that same year's, Root 100 list of most influential African Americans. Basically, he's young, but he's a firecracker and he's pushing boundaries. In this book, he's talking to you the reader as the Black friend, the one that calls well meaning white people out on their missteps reminds them why we don't say certain things and gently educates while pushing us out of our comfort zones. He shares personal stories of racism, macro and micro aggressions, and he shares about his own screw ups in the past, because he went to a predominantly white school, where he was often just trying to fit in. So he would let things slide that maybe would have ruffled feathers a little bit if he had brought them up. At that predominantly white school, he was often called a number of racist epithets that imply that he's only Black on the outside and white on the inside, because he was so great at fitting in with the others at school, letting them feel like he was one of them. And that means he's been having these conversations and observing them from the inside for decades, even though he's still so young. I would say this book is geared toward a YA audience, especially when he brings up certain cultural touchstones that he assumes the reader hasn't seen or experienced, like The Spice Girls, or 98 degrees and the Backstreet Boys, which those of us that are not YA think, "Wait, what do you mean, nobody knows who the Spice Girls are?" That's ridiculous. It feels like a personal attack. It's also a great option for adults that want to tread into these waters, you just have to know that sometimes you're gonna feel a little dated. For example, if you picked up How to Be An Anti-Racist by Ibram X. Kendi, and the tone or the writing or the author just didn't resonate with you, this might be the perfect alternative. It's funny. It's got Spotify playlists in the back. It's interesting the whole way through one plus slash minus to this book is that he includes interviews with other black creatives, artists, writers, people in the TV industry, and those are really exceptional and fun to read. But every once awhile I felt like he rushed through the front part of a chapter in order to get to that second interview section of each chapter. So he cut short his personal experiences his own observations, his very funny and sparkling writing in order to say, Now let's hear from Ava DuVernay, which is great, but I wanted even more Frederick Joseph. And here the book didn't feel too long by any means. So I wished those more personal sections would have been expanded a little more. All that being said, I gave it four and a half stars and would absolutely buy it for a friend or a loved one. That was a great starting place in these conversations. This was The Black Friend by Frederick Joseph.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 31:26

I love it. I love it and you really bought it just because of the cover. But then you got all that out of it.

Kaytee Cobb 31:32

Isn't that great? Sometimes covers, I mean, sometimes they really do good things for books.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 31:37

Yes, they do. Okay, Kaytee, this next book, I need to actually say there's a content warning. So I need everybody who's listening with their babies, listening with their children. I need you to stop it. Stop the podcast. Let's put your headphones whatever you need to do. Mindy, I need you to muff it. Okay,

because y'all I have a book to talk about and I... it is the book that wins the award for I asked four different people if I should bring this to the big show. But I have a rule that I bring my current reads to the big show.

Kaytee Cobb 32:15

I'm excited. I want to hear about it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 32:18

Okay, Kaytee, here you go. Here we go. It's okay to read all kinds of books right?

Kaytee Cobb 32:23

Sure.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 32:23

All the all the babies have left the room.

Kaytee Cobb 32:26

Correct.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 32:27

Okay, this book, and I'm gonna hear I'm gonna hear typing as soon as I as soon as they say this, this book is called The Dragon's Bride by Katee Robert.

Kaytee Cobb 32:39

Oh, good, a Katee book.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 32:41

Yes, and she spells it creatively like you do but differently. She spells it K-A-T-E-E so you guys are both just, you're riffing on the spelling. Okay, All right. Here's the setup. Our lead character is Briar. She is a woman in big trouble. She's trapped in an emotionally and physically abusive marriage to a dangerous man. She has no good options, which is how she finds herself making a deal with a demon. She gets freedom from her husband in return for seven years of service. She expects the service to be backbreaking and harsh. She doesn't expect to be put on. She doesn't expect to be put on an auction box in a room full of literal monsters and sold to the highest bidder. She is sold to Sol. You're looking at the cover. I can tell from your face right now. Yes. All right. There you go. I hope everyone else is while you're listening. She's sold to Sol. Sol is a dragon. He might seem kinder than his fearsome looks imply but she knows better than to trust the way he seems to want to take care of her and how invested he is in her pleasure, in her experience. If something is too good to be true, it certainly is. So for Briar actually having real feelings for a dragon is out of the question. She has suffered enough. But dear readers, we shall see.

Kaytee Cobb 34:09

Is this Beauty and the Beast spin off. Is that what we would call this little Stockholm Syndrome situation?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:16

No, I don't think it's Stockholm Syndrome. But there are some Beauty and the Beast elements to it.

Kaytee Cobb 34:20

Does Sol have a library?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:22

Yes. Sol has a library. I can't remember how I heard about this. I really honestly wish that I would remember because I wish I could thank the person. But I can't remember if it was on Kindle Unlimited. I was like, I don't know, how bad could it be actually, I actually thought it would be really horrible. But that was kind of what I went. I was like, it'll be so bad, it'll be hilarious. And I was in a terrible book slump so I took a chance. Okay, I want to say up front. There is a ton a metric ton of graphic sex in this book, but it is good sex. It is consensual, everyone's happy kind of sex. So I want to be really clear about what we're talking about. We're not talking about torture or anything like that. Sol is a good guy. So I'm not gonna spoiled much. Yes, he's a good Dragon Man. And so you there because I just want to be clear about that because I know I would be really trepidatious if this text was like, you know, violent, but it's good.

Kaytee Cobb 35:22

Yeah, yeah,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 35:23

It's it's very, very consensual. The main thing you are going to see when you look this up on Amazon, and we just need to get this elephant out of the room. Is that your will you're gonna see this epic cover for yourself. And I love the cover. I kind of wanted like painted and watercolor and put it up on my library. But here's the thing. Dragons apparently and I didn't know this, Kaytee, maybe you did. Dragons have two peens.

Kaytee Cobb 35:48

Oh...

Meredith Monday Schwartz 35:49

Right. So let's just get that out of the way. Let's just get that out of the way. It's not Sol's fault he was born a Dragon. Okay, everybody, okay? So they are used to great effect. I'm just saying. Okay. Okay. So now we know what kind of book we're dealing with. Right? We think because here's the thing. I thought I was there for the dragon sex. But then, completely shockingly, what happened next is a great relationship story. It's a story about an abused woman healing from really, really real trauma, and a caring, incredibly emotionally mature Dragon Man who helps her through that trauma. But she also knows she needs to heal herself. She cannot be healed by another person and their love. Like there's this total notion of our own self healing. And he sort of walks that beside her and loves her really, really well. Kaytee color me both blushing and shocked that they talk about important things in a healthy way. They model mature, new love in a relationship really beautifully. Predictably, because this is a romance there, they run into some big obstacles. And I was cheering for them at the end. Now, look, I took a risk.

And I recommended this to another reader who has adventurous tastes. I'm not going to tell you who that person is because they have not given me permission to do that. But this person is someone who I trust. She read it, devoured it, loved it and said here's the thing. Not only is it sexy as all get out, I mean apparently I have a beast kink. Let's just get that out of the way. But it's It's sexy. It is also emotionally really mature. And shockingly well written. Do I need to read more in the deal with a demon series? No. Though the next one apparently deals with a lady who's auctioned off to a Kraken, bless her heart. But I am glad I spent a couple hours in this world. This is The Dragon's Bride by Katee Robert.

Kaytee Cobb 38:07

Just to be clear, a kraken has lots of tentacles, right? So it's basically an octopus book.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:13

You know what? I can't comment on the blessings and curses of the Kraken physique. I have not read that book. But now the more we talk about it, the more I want. So, yes, so that is The Dragon's Bride. And that book leads us absolutely perfectly to our deep dive Kaytee. Because the deep dive the question that we've gotten that is so apropos right now is, are there books that are quote unquote, terrible or embarrassing that you hide that you read? Or maybe that you don't make super public? So Kaytee, when we talked about doing this for the show, how what was the first thing you thought about what were some of your big feels? Because I know you have them.

Kaytee Cobb 38:59

Well, the first thing that I did was I went through years of reading history to see if I had anything that I wouldn't be willing to talk about publicly in my reading history. And I thought about myself evolving as a reader because I do think there were times in my life when I would not have been willing to talk about a book like The Dragon's Bride, or even even The Kiss Quotient, which I've pressed on the show as one of my favorite books that I really love. But there was absolutely a time in my life and I think it would probably be pre motherhood slash when I had my first young baby, that I would have been mortified to post on Instagram, the cover even of a book that I have some books that I had read when I first started getting into steamy romance, when I first started really enjoying that. And now I don't have any shame whatsoever about any of the books I read. So when we talked about this, and especially the phrase secret pleasure, there is nothing in my reading life that I want to keep a secret because I don't care if anyone else thinks that it's appropriate for me to read sexy time, graphic novels, old classics,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 40:24

I was gonna say, I was gonna say. Okay, I totally get it. I know that that's how you feel, right? Are there books, though that would fall into in social justice circles. People who, like you're, like yourself are very well read on the social justice topic. Are there books that you would feel like? Well, I can't read that because from that point of view, it would be looked down on if I read it.

Kaytee Cobb 40:55

Oh, that's so that's an interesting idea. Like, I would not read and if I did, I would not tell anyone if I read Candace Owens Blackout, because of the stigma and the ways that it's used in popular conversation, in order to further an agenda that I am firmly against. So if I picked it up, and I paged through it, and I said, Okay, I really just want to get a feel for whatever is going on in this woman's head. Yeah, I

probably would not put it in my collage, because I wouldn't want anybody else to think that I was then endorsing that, but not because I want it to be a secret, but because of like, you know, be afraid of people are like, Oh, well, I saw that book on your Instagram. That means you loved it. And right, that's not necessarily the case for either of us. So that exactly to be afraid of.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 41:46

Right. Yeah, no, that totally makes sense. But even that isn't a book that you were like, It's my secret pleasure. Right? And I don't want to talk about it. Right. So. So I yeah, there is a difference there. And I like you, I feel really the same way. I realized that I contain multitudes. Today's you know, current reads really show that right? Like my mystery, a nonfiction parenting book, and then a super steamy, really graphic romance. And I embrace the fact that I contain multitudes. Now, we have a really public platform. And so it did give me pause to talk about like, our people, what are people going, I wasn't necessarily what are people going to think about me having a dragon kink, it was more, I want to be really sure that only the right listeners are hearing us talk about right two peens, you know what I mean? I don't, because I know that we have a lot of listeners that are little, we have four year old fans. And so I always want parents to be able to trust that we're not just going to spring something inappropriate, or something that they're going to have to explain, you know, I don't want any artwork in the, in the kindergarten the next day showing the two peens on a dragon, although that's a lovely song title. But, you know. So we want to be really, So I want to be careful about that. But I would be lying if I didn't say, you know, I checked with four different people. So clearly, like, there was also an element of like, what are people going to think about me talking about a book like this? So even so I'm almost 50 I have, you know, a public platform to talk about reading. I've been doing this for, you know, we're now in our fifth season, and yet I still can have some things that give me pause, or that I wouldn't necessarily, you know, want everyone to, you know, to know about but I want to be able to read that. So, I think what people can do is, is really think about like, okay, maybe you're thinking to yourself, Well, no, I'm not ashamed of any of my reading. But ask yourself these questions. Are there books that you maybe purposely only buy on Kindle? Because you don't want the cover at the pool? Are there books that you talk about books on your Instagram, but maybe are there some that you don't post about on Instagram? You know, and again, I'm not saying that everyone needs to talk about everything or be public, you know, we all can have the privacy that we want to have.

Kaytee Cobb 44:16

Of course,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:16

We're not, We don't owe everyone every bit of knowledge about our reading habits, about any of our habits, but you know, not about our reading habits. But before you really quickly sort of say, Oh, I would never, you know, I don't have any shame or there's no guilty pleasures, like, I know for a fact that when I bring a Debbie Macomber book to the show there, there are definitely people who are rolling their eyes for sure. Right. And when we get to Booker season, like where we are right now, right, The Booker Longlist is out and all these great readers who I really am Liz Hein who's just one of my favorite readers, and I just and she reads all kinds of books, definitely not just not just, you know, big, important books. She would be the first person to say she reads all of everything, but she's really good about reading those long listed, you know, kind of important books. And I'm always like, oh, there's Kaytee, or

there's Liz over there reading the trees and I'm reading The Dragon's Bride. And you know what I mean? And so there is an element of like, is all my reading passing muster? Does it really need to? I think the answer to that question is no, it really doesn't. Because sometimes, you just need to read a Debbie Macomber, or you just need to reread the Twilight series, like, that's one or The 50 Shades. Like, if you like the 50 Shades series, be loud and proud about that, because there is no reason to hide that under a bushel. Right. And so, but I think there are pockets of our reading, whether it's, a lot of times we talked about it being sexual in nature. But there's other things too. I know there are people who are embarrassed when they read middle grade, like you and I don't feel that way. But I know for a fact that there are a lot of readers that are like, I would never put that on my Instagram because it's I'm reading a kid's book. And so I would just say we all need to, again, reader know thyself, really examine how this deep dive struck you when we started talking about it.

Kaytee Cobb 46:13

Or if something came to mind immediately for you.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:16

Exactly. And so it doesn't necessarily mean you need to tell everybody about that. But I think it means it's another way for us to know ourselves as readers and empower ourselves in whatever way that works out for you to be able to say, You know what, I want to read all the Katee Robert books that are out there, because I just love the deal with the demon series.

Kaytee Cobb 46:39

Or anything. It could be Jodi Picoult, but you think that that's only for people that like, you know, the books that you first walk into the bookstore? And they're the ones on the main table and you think you're better reader than that?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:51

Oh, yes, yes, right. Good point, Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 46:54

I think, I think for me, the the sticking point kind of for this conversation was the word secret and pleasure together. I it's really important to me, and to a lot of us to get pleasure from my reading. I want my reading to be pleasurable. I just don't keep it a secret like I don't, I don't have something that I need to like tuck under my shirt as I walk out of the bookstore so nobody sees what I bought, you know? Like, put it in a clear plastic bag, everybody can look at it. I did also have a slight confession, in that I flipped this around for myself. And I said, Well, Kaytee, you're, you're not interesting right now, for this deep dive. You can't just say you'll read anything. So I started thinking about, if I would get judgy about books that other people are reading that I think they should keep them a secret. And like this part actually makes me kind of flush up a little bit, because I think this is a little bit on the edge of what people are going to be okay with. But this is all I could come up with. If you read all books by cisgender, heterosexual white men, I will say that you if you have any variety whatsoever in your reading, if you have stepped out of that comfort zone, the white patriarchy in any direction at all, I DGAF, I do not give a flip about what you read. Right. But if you have put yourself so firmly into a rut that only includes this certain type of author, that's, that's the only thing I could think of that I would get judgy about that I

would give other readers side eye about. So it's not my guilty pleasure. But it is something that I'm like, Well, I honestly, I don't think I know, any readers like that. I don't know if there's readers like that, that even listen to the podcast, because we bring such a huge breadth. I don't know if they would be interested in the books that we're talking about on a regular basis here. But that is the only spot that I was like, I don't know, if I would, if I would, you know, follow that person anymore. Or listen to their opinions about books.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:02

Right. And I firmly believe that people, all people should be able to read any way that they want to. So I think that they shouldn't you know, I I wouldn't judge somebody who did that. But I would feel I think I would feel bad for them only because I would feel like they're missing out on so much. You know what I mean? That there's so there's so much else that could be really, really wonderful. So you know, but you know, I appreciate I appreciate you saying that, Kaytee because that is an honest, good, that's an honest Yeah. And I and but it's but it's what's true. And I think that that is exactly why we have, we want to have these conversations because we want to be able to discuss all the different ways that that we feel about it and not just when that feels easy or something that everyone's going to completely agree with. Right? Totally. So good. Okay, so hopefully we've given you some things to think about in your own reading. Where are those places that maybe you feel like there are guilty pleasures are secret pleasures and is that benefiting you or do you want to lean into those secret pleasures even more? Either one of those would be absolutely okay.

Kaytee Cobb 50:09

Or unsecret them,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 50:10

Right. If you want to, or lean into the secret part of it, right? So, now Kaytee, we're at that fantastic time where, and I will say that in *The Dragon's Bride*, there was a very beautiful, sort of countryside, garden sort of element in that book. And I was really thinking, this is where I would like my fountain to be on this next episode when we record so we're gonna have everybody join us at the fountain here. So everyone is imagining their favorite garden, whether it's big or small, in your own house, or someplace you traveled to. And in the middle of that garden is a fountain. So Kaytee, what is your wish that you are going to ping splash into the fountain?

Kaytee Cobb 50:55

Okay, today, I wish that everyone had access to a great library card collection. One of my very favorite things about Libby, the Digital Library Materials app is that you can put all your library cards on there and search everywhere at once for a title you're interested in. This is where I confess, I'm apparently I'm doing this a lot today that I have 12 library cards on my Libby account. It's really excessive. But what that means is that I can get my ears or my Kindle on to almost any title I want in very short order. And when I can't, that's why I have a membership to libro.fm. Because every once in a while there's too long of a wait, and I can't handle it. Although I do tend to stockpile those credits, we get questions pretty regularly in the bookish friends group about which library systems are free to access and which ones are worth paying to have access to. And I just wish that we could basically socialize libraries for the entire US that everyone that anyone who wants or needs a great library card could know that their

membership would make it possible for them to get access to a great collection not eliminate holds entirely. I want authors to get paid big cash dollar still, but make it easier for everyone to see how world expanding a great library collection can be. That's my wish. I want to sprinkle it over all of you today.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:12

I love that that's a really good wish. There you go. You did it. Okay. My wish is that I want everyone who looks at fall reading as a very specific time of year to experience right. So some people don't consider fall reading to be any different than spring reading Who the heck cares. But if you love fall reading and every year, you really, really look forward to it, we're in the middle of August right now, I want everyone I wish that everyone would take some time right now to really start to plan their fall reading so that you can have your holds put in the library, right? This is a good time to do that. So that you can get some orders in at your local indie, so that you can choose what audiobooks you want in your ears for those fall walks because I just know at some point it's not going to be 110 at eight o'clock in the morning here in Austin and I'm going to be able to start walking my brand new puppy who I can't walk outside because I don't want to burn his baby feet. So plan I wish everyone would plan these things for me. I know that I'm planning on reading Plain Bad Heroines. Roxanna and I are going to buddy read that. That's going to be our fall buddy read. Last fall our buddy read was Shadow of the Wind which was a fantastic fall buddy read. I of course always recommend All Things Cease to Appear by Elizabeth Brundage. If you really like murderfull and spooky, not spooey that is one that is HSP stay away from but and then of course The Lamplighters is the perfect spooey choice. So

Kaytee Cobb 53:45

and I'm leading a buddy read of The Name of the Wind by Patrick Rothfuss in the fall for the bookish friends.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:52

There you go. There you go.

Kaytee Cobb 53:53

Excited about a big chunker

Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:55

Right, that's perfect. So get your hauls in, get your order put in however you want to have that book, but think about your fall reading now in the middle of August. Because maybe I don't start my fall reading until October 1, because again, Texas, but maybe in September you start getting some cooler weather and you start then you get your Halloween decorations out. You get your fall decor out. Start planning right now because what happens too often is we find ourselves it's October 15. And we're like, oh, boy, I need some really good fall but witches and I failed and all the all the holds are too long because everyone's doing that. So think about it now. That's my wish.

Kaytee Cobb 54:34

Wait, ping, splash.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 54:36

Ping splash. There we go. You did it for me. Thank you. Okay, that is it for this week. As a reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me I'm Meredith at @Meredith.reads on Instagram.

Kaytee Cobb 54:48

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 54:52

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

Kaytee Cobb 55:01

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 55:07

And if you really want to help us or you want more of our content, feel free to join us as a bookish friend by supporting us on Patreon for just \$5 a month. You get a ton of additional content from us. 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 us running our small business and us finding our perfect audience.

Kaytee Cobb 55:32

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 55:38

Until next week may or coffee be hot,

Kaytee Cobb 55:40

and your book be unputdownable

Meredith Monday Schwartz 55:42

Happy reading Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 55:44

Happy reading Meredith

Kaytee Cobb 55:53

I am so sweaty.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 55:54

Hey, you know what mug I need. I want a, I want a Currently Reading mug that says "may your coffee be hot and your book be unputdownable."

Kaytee Cobb 56:05

That's a good idea. I was just thinking now that like because I'm so sweaty, I wish I had iced coffee right now. Right. Between the deep dive and and confessions

Meredith Monday Schwartz 56:17

and all the all the dragon peens, definitely

Kaytee Cobb 56:20

The dragon peens... just the sweatiest