



# Season 5, Episode 31: Fantastic Stories + Boss My TBR

Mon, Mar 13, 2023 • 55:39

**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** 00:23

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** 00:32

I'm Meredith Monday, Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas. And I am always looking for ways to boss people around

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:41

and I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom for living in New Mexico. And I love it when a book is truly beautiful. This is episode number 31 of season five. And we are so glad you're here.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:52

Kaytee, I am so glad to be here. I was just telling you before we got started, it's been two weeks since I have recorded, which feels like a really long time

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:00

does feel like a long time.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 01:01

Okay, I'm really ready to talk about books. Again, I've got all this pent up book talk energy.

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:05

Yes, and we love it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:07

Everybody loves when Meredith is a little caffeinated, a little bit excited, a little bit like ready to tackle the book talk.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:12**

Yes, I've got lots and lots of things that I want to talk about. Okay. But first, we want to let you know that our deep dive today is going to introduce a new segment it is called boss my TBR. And the way we're going to do this is we went to our bookish friends who are our Patreon supporters in our Facebook group. And we said, Give us five titles from your TBR. And we will let you know what three of those five we think you should read and we're going to put them in the order we think that they that these people should read them. So we're going to do that to two of our bookish friends. In the deep dive today.

**Kaytee Cobb 01:46**

We'll see how it goes. I love trying anything with you always. And so it was fun to play with these titles and think about what kind of reader this person might be.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:55**

I know we got hundreds of responses. So we could pretty much do this deep dive segment to time. Yeah, exactly. All right, which is great. And we love that. Okay, so it is not the first week of the month, but it is the first week of the month that you're hearing currently reading this month because we had our spring break. So that means we have a little bit of mischief to manage the one commercial that you will get in our otherwise completely ad free big show format. So Katie do want to talk a little bit about this specific thing we want people to know about supporting us the currently reading Patreon group.

**Kaytee Cobb 02:28**

Yes, I do. Part of the reason that we always put these commercials at the beginning of the month is because up until just a few months ago, Patreon always renewed on the first of the month, and we didn't want anyone feeling like they were joining later. And then kind of getting screwed over and having to pay again. \$5 just a few days later. In fact, I will tell you, I used to offer refunds to people who joined on the last day of the month because I felt so terrible about that situation, right? Because they would be charged on the 30th of the month when they joined. And then again on the first very next day. Yeah, it was such a pain in the butt. So the good news is that even though this is no longer the first week of March, Patreon has now introduced monthly billing, which means whatever day you join, that's what day your subscription renews. Which means, even if you decide to join today, March 13, you can get a full month's worth of Patreon content from currently reading before it renews that five bucks and you can decide, oh, I got all the whole month long of content. And this was worth it to me. So we hope that you'll give it a shot. Come over, hang out with us. And we think that you will love it.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:35**

Absolutely join more than 2200 of your favorite bookish friends

**Kaytee Cobb 03:40**

soon to be favorite bookish friends. You're gonna find somebody you love over there for sure. Exactly.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:44**

All right, Kaytee. So let's start out our regular content the way we always do with our bookish moment of the week. So what's your

**Kaytee Cobb** 03:51

okay Meredith this week, I brought props for my bookish moment and it's gonna be sad for everybody that can't see us right now, but I promise to share on Instagram. So today I want to tell you about Fairyloot This is not a new company. This company started in March of 2016, which is shockingly, now, seven years ago, I finally got my button gear, put myself on the waitlist because you have to sign up for the waitlist and now I'm subscribed. It's amazing. It's amazing. The first book I got from them is a copy of a book that I hadn't even heard of. It's called spice road by Maya Abraham. I'm going to hold it up for you. So this is the book my gosh, look at these sprayed edges. Look at this art on the inside. Oh look at the cover inside the dust jacket. Isn't it beautiful? It's like the most stunning book I've ever had on my shelves. And it is just a few dollars more than the regular hardback that released also this past month, which is mind blowing to me, right? All the auditions they put out are like this. So I signed up for the book only box for both adult and ya for them and I get gorgeous books sent to me every month. It's amazing the reason they came on my radar Because last year in the fall, they introduced a special edition of the Scythe series. So here's my copy of site, the trilogy. Here's the sprayed edges on the inside, I have to put them close to my face. So it actually shows you where beautiful, there is our stunning art on the endpapers just like in my other special edition, I also have a special edition of Cinder coming. So these are books that I have read and loved, and really want to keep on my shelves for myself for my kids, and then new books that just happen to be beautiful as well, which I really love. Okay, so it's very loose, very like, yes, flute, okay, like booty or, like pirates. Yes. Okay. Yes. As opposed to a liar that you would play. Okay. Yeah. Okay, right. These are all bad words for a podcast that we're saying. Like we're saying lots of bad audio, what are these books that you choose the one that you want, or you're surprised by what you get is a surprise. But there are spoilers. So they send out a reel beforehand that you can kind of get a feel for what's coming up in the next month box. And then there are accounts online, that will spoil that box for you. So if you're worried that they're going to send you something you don't like, you can absolutely skip for the upcoming month knowing what title is going to be in that box. There's also this like super fancy expanded, like book and goodies set where you get treats and candles and all kinds of other stuff. And I decided I didn't need that because I have enough of that like tchotchke stuff in my life. But this book only beautiful edition option is right up my alley.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 06:38

And it's all fantasy.

**Kaytee Cobb** 06:39

It is all fantasy.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 06:41

That sounds very interesting. And those books that you held up for me and that you'll put on Instagram, so absolutely gorgeous.

**Kaytee Cobb** 06:47

What is your bookish moment friend?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 06:49

okay, my bookish moment is weird, but it's like on my heart to share this bookish moment. And it has been so I'm going to talk about it and it is going to get bookish. So just bear with me. Just a second. Okay. All right. So Kaytee, you know this. So a couple of weeks ago, Johnny and I took a vacation and we hadn't taken a vacation together for a lot of years for various things we hadn't for a really long time. We went San Antonio planned it I rented this really beautiful room and this at this resort. I really liked took some time and trouble on this. We did not have good time. Yes, it was not a good trip for variety of reasons. Now Johnny, and I've been married for 21 years. You guys have heard me talk about him all the time. I love him. I love my husband. But we've been married for 21 years, we didn't have a good time, we were at odds, we were misaligned. We were getting into arguments he didn't really want he doesn't really like to travel. I was irritated by that. Blah, blah, blah. We ended up coming home a day early, big huge WAMP on this right? Okay, why am I telling you that first part first of all, because it gives some context to the bookish part. Secondly, because here's the thing that's on my heart, Katie, we often hear about marriages being really great or catastrophic ly bad. We're getting you know what I mean? Like that. Or just we don't hear anything. I want to normalize a saying, Yeah, I love my husband. And we had a terrible time or fight or whatever last weekend was, but whatever it is, I want to normalize the saying, You're not only going to hear me talk about my husband in great ways, because he's a wonderful man. But you're also going to hear me say, sometimes things aren't so great. And that's okay. And I just want to normalize that being a part of middle marriage to you guys have heard me say I think long term marriage is really sexy, because it is and it can be. But it also can be really hard. That is true. And it can be and neither of those things are true all the time. And that's okay. So first of all, I just wanted to normalize people talking about that in public feel like that is not a part of a lot of public discussion. Agree, you know what I mean? So he and I were not super happy with each other, I was really not happy with him, because like I said, I'd worked hard on this weekend. So we're kind of stumbling around living life, you know, perpendicularly not really talking much to each other. And he finished the book he had been currently reading. Now normally, he would come to me and say, Hey, I need another book. But I wasn't really speaking at this point. And so he goes to my we live in a house full of books. And so I was out doing something. And he he said, I went up to a shelf that I feel like I hardly ever see you in front of. So I knew that's where I wanted to be because remember, he's mad at me today, right? And he's like, an iPad is a book from the shelf. And I said to myself, this is the last book that she would want me to read. And so that's what I'm getting. So he picked a book out of anger, which, you know, I totally understand obstinacy book. I like yes, very vibe. Very Enneagram eight. Exactly. And so he chose The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck. Little did he know

**Kaytee Cobb** 09:47

poor Johnny

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 09:47

that I knew that that actually would be perfect for him. Because he loves books that are kind of slow and setting filled and a lot of it exposition and a lot of character, not a ton of heart pounding plot. I knew I would have handed Steinbeck to him a long time ago. So he's thinking he's reading a book that I like, wouldn't want him to read. I let him continue to think that, but he has been loving it. And we have had to then we made up as you do each other. And, you know, we've moved on with our lives. And now he's continuing to read Grapes of Wrath, which I hadn't actually read since college, but I love Steinbeck. He

is so thrilled with this book. He's almost done with it, and he's gonna go straight into East of Eden. So he's kind of found his new author crush, which I kind of love. So I realized that that bush moment was long, and a journey, but it was on my heart to share all of that, for whatever reason, I just want to be authentic about my reading life. This is what's been going on in my reading life.

**Kaytee Cobb 10:49**

The only thing that could make this better for me is if he was like, Well, I went to this shelf that you never go to because I wanted to be different and unique and special little flower. And it turns out that that was like the shelf where you set aside books that you think would be great for Johnny, that would have been perfect.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 11:04**

And what if I been that smart? I actually would have put that on the shelf for him. I kind of have a shelf that's just classics. Yeah, that's the shelf that that he went to, but lots of books on that shelf are some of my favorites are some of my favorites, including The Count of Monte Cristo? Perfect kaytee.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 11:18**

Let's talk about our current reads. What's the first book you want to talk about this week?

**Kaytee Cobb 11:23**

Okay, Meredith, we did take two weeks where you didn't get to record on the podcast, but we did also just record with Laura Tremaine, and this first one I'm going to talk about I also talked about with her so if you need to swap a little laundry or get caught up on your Kindle, you're going to hear the same thing here. I'm going to talk about black cake by Charmaine Wilkerson. Yes, because I cannot not tell our bookish friends and our listeners about this book. This book is not under the radar. It came out in February 2022. So it's just over a year old and it was a read with Janet pic. But I personally feel like it was missile to me when you read the blurb about it, or when you read reviews about it. There's a lot of heavy sad words, generational trauma, drama, drama, drama, like it feels very, like inherited sadness, and I was like, I don't I don't think I can do that. But I do like cake, right? Yes, because we contain multitudes. So what I found inside was instead of that heavy, heavy heavy was a few things I really love. First, we have this current timeline of Eleanor Bennett being our main character, and she has just passed away. She left an eight hour video message via her estate lawyer for her two children who are named Byron and Benny she calls them b&b When she's happy with them. Benny has been estranged from their family for years now. So when she comes home for her mom's funeral and the settling of the estate, it's a pretty loaded situation. That's the heavy right? When she starts watching this video message with her brother by rent their mom reveals that they have a sister that they never knew about. She then goes back in time to tell this story about a young woman named Cubby, who lives in the Caribbean, and has found a passion for swimming. This story doesn't seem to intersect with what they know about their own mom's history. So the siblings are wondering who this coffee person is and what she has to do with their own family. We the reader uncovered the connections at the same time they do this coffee story includes a murder an actual train wreck, lost love, long distance swimming, and slowly we start to understand that that past timeline, as well as the current one includes the implosion of their nuclear family. Through it all. We are repeatedly served this Caribbean treat of black cake, I love cake, it's made as a dessert. It's made as a coming home flavor. And it's made as a way to communicate love

when words are not enough, which feels very personal to me this week, because I had a kind of rough week and I made a very elaborate carrot cake for Jason's birthday. It felt like a way to love him. Well, even when middle marriage is a little messy and not everything is perfect all the time. We're coming up on 17 years that cake with stuffed full of fruits and vegetables like black cake and the story was me pouring out love when I didn't really have the words or even the attitude to say what I needed to say.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 14:05

Yeah, we have a sour cream coffee cake that we call the apology cake.

**Kaytee Cobb** 14:09

Oh, I like that. Yeah. All right. Well, my apology cake would probably be Tres Leches. But this carrot cake is now a close again, for sure. So what really kept this book flying by for me was the very, very short chapters. Sometimes they were only a paragraph long. Usually they were less than five pages, which means reading catnip for me, I can be like, Well, I definitely have time for that one. Oh, well. That's just one more paragraph I can for sure read that chapter and it would just be like chipping away little nibbles at a time until all of a sudden I had read 150 pages I will be sure to include the link to a book club kit that includes the recipe for black cake but it does take four to six months to make it so if you don't make it that's fine with me. Also put the carrot cake recipe in the comments and maybe we can get married have topology cake in there too. Oh yeah, for sure. This is a story of family and sweet I mean pancake and personal history, and it gave me all the fields and left this family of b&b and their mother Eleanor and Covey indelibly printed onto my heart. I am so glad that Katie and I decided to pick it up to read it together. This was black cake by Charmaine Wilkerson.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 15:17

I don't care how many times I listened to you talk about that book. It sounds so good. Oh, good. I love the idea of a cake that takes four to six months to like, there's just something so important about making food like I just I love it. I love it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 15:31

Yeah, for sure. What's your first one?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 15:33

So this first book, I feel like several months ago was pretty big. This falls into the CLI fi kind of worldwide disaster genre that I liked so much. This is Aurora, by David cap. And did you listen to this one?

**Kaytee Cobb** 15:45

No, I don't even know the title of this one.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 15:47

Okay, this is very interesting, but it's not what I thought it was initially. So here's our setup. Our story starts with a disaster that everyone in the world knows is coming. A solar storm basically knocks out power everywhere, all across globally. Apparently, about 100 years ago, this same kind of thing happened. But like in late 1800s, it's more than 100 years ago, it happened but we didn't have the grid

that we have now. So it really didn't affect much of anything. But when it happens at the beginning of our story, the entire world is completely in the dark. So then our story is focused in Aurora, Illinois, where our lead character Aubrey Wheeler has been just trying to get by after her piece of crap low level criminal ex husband runs out on her and leaves her with his cranky teenage son to care for and to raise. So Aubrey has already been having a hard time and now with society immediately and suddenly returned to the stone age's. She has to assume the role of a different kind of provider and protector within this suburban neighborhood in Aurora, Illinois, where she lives and then across the country in California's Silicon Valley. We have apres brother, Tom, who she's estranged from. He is a fantastically wealthy startup CEO like Elon Musk level of wealth, and he's been a prepper. For years prepping for exactly this kind of disaster is a very important part of the story. And so he plans to hide out the crisis in this incredible desert bunker that he built for maximum comfort and security. So Aubrey is completely unprepared. Tom is over prepared. Okay. All right. But things get messy because family is messy. Global outages are messy. And humans are human no matter what situation they're in. And that is the meat of our story. Okay. When I went into this, I was expecting it was mostly going to be this kind of clarify, post apocalyptic situation, right. I was really thinking that's what the book was about, because it had been really, really marketed with a big marketing push behind it, that this is what it was, but it is not any of those things. It has been marketed as a CLI fi thriller. It is not a sci fi. I like I really need people to understand that because the marketing will totally lead you astray. In fact, I had to pull a couple of quotes from the marketing that is everywhere for this book. Linwood Barclay says, Forget a good night's sleep. Aurora is epic and flat out suspenseful. No, it is not flat out. suspenseful. Blake Crouch says David cap is one of the best thriller writers working today. David cap is a great writer. This is not a thriller. And then Brian De Palma says Aurora will keep you turning pages right up until the end. Now that last one is true, because I listened to this one. And I wanted to listen the whole way through. But after the first few chapters, nothing about the book is really about the corneal event, which is what it's called, it's just about the people. It's about how people react to huge life changing events. It's about the big, gigantic patchwork of human responses to fear and tragedy and the unknown. And actually, that's okay. In fact, it's better than okay, because this was such a good book. Once I got over wondering, when some big thriller thing was going to happen. I just couldn't settle into what was actually happening. And that was a book that was really fascinating, and unpredictable and utopian, not dystopian, in parts and awful in parts and kind of beautiful in its whole and at the end, extraordinarily full of redemption. I ended up liking this book so much that I give it 4.5 stars, which I can actually see improving over time, because this is a book that sticks with you. I certainly found myself committing several quotes to my commonplace notebook, which is always an indicator of a quality book. It's just not a quality thriller. This is Aurora by David cat.

**Kaytee Cobb** 19:50

Interesting. I was Googling it while you were talking and I wanted to know more about David Koepp and it said he's one of the most successful screenwriters working today. Did it feel cinematic to you

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 20:00

It was well, no. Okay.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 20:01**

But I don't see that as a criticism at all, only because I know exactly what you mean when you're asking that. And I've read lots of books that I would describe that right? It didn't. And that was a part of what I was expecting. Right. This is a really thoughtful book about humans and family and found family and human nature. That is what this book is. And it bothers me that the marketing team behind it couldn't find a way to make that good enough, because it's a very, very good book. I enjoyed it very much. But only after I let go of that pulse pounding page turning, right movie of a book. When I let go of all of that, then I really started to enjoy it and I liked it a lot.

**Kaytee Cobb 20:40**

Okay, I'm intrigued. My second one was also not what I expected, but not in a good way. Today, I'm going to talk about love on the brain by Ali Hazelwood. This is the second full length novel from Ali Hazelwood. I brought her first one, which is called the love hypothesis to the show on episode 21 of season four. So if you want happy gushing about steamy, nerdy romance, you're gonna go out and I want to go back in the catalog in to that episode. And skip me talking about this book because this is not it. The love hypothesis was published in September of 2021. Since then, she has published three novellas, and this additional full length novel in a year. She does all of this right with another one due out in June of this year. 2023 lady needs to settle down. It's not doing her ratings, any favors to have more and more and more books that are not very good. Yeah, so she calls these STEM earnest romances, that's feminist and stem smashed together in a portmanteau, in case it doesn't sound like I'm saying a real word to you, because it's not a real word be conics. Foster is our main character. She is a neuroscientist who landed a dream job working for NASA on a project involving helmets and astronauts and keeping their wits about them in extreme situations like visiting other planets. She also runs her life on the inner Montra. What would Marie Curie do in order to help her make big decisions about her life? To that end, she is behind an anonymous Twitter account that answers the question regularly, what would Marie Curie do in her own life? And those of its millions of followers who will bring questions like how do I deal with this issue at work when I'm pretty sure it's based on the fact that I'm a woman or a woman of color? Just like when we asked a bookish question in our Facebook group and the people respond, she has formed this incredible community around her account that doesn't even take her direct interaction. Most of the time. All of this is great. I'm here for it. I like it. When B shows up to be part of the amazing project at NASA, she finds out that her arch rival nemesis, grad school, enemy, etc. Is there as Colleen His name is Levi ward. And if you're remembering right now that I have a son named Levi, you are correct. And in my head, I called this person Logan the whole way through the book and had to remind myself later that that is not his name, so I could tell you about it. Levi is attractive in all the ways, but he's also a standoffish prick. And he's gigantic, he makes B look like an actual insect because of their height disparity. Q iros. B also has a medical disability that leads to her regularly fainting, and who has to pick her up and keep her safe? Of course, it's a gigantic man named Levi because again, he's huge.

**Kaytee Cobb 23:18**

I know like the groaning this was my actual groaning when I was reading this.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 23:23**

You said that this was feminist and this is set up to be all the anti feminist trope.

**Kaytee Cobb 23:29**

Yes. Fainting women fainting women with giant men. This book has every romance trope but played in exactly the way that annoys me secret identities that you're sure will get revealed in some awful way. Check tiny fainting woman who has to be physically rescued on the rag by a giant dude. Check misunderstandings that are required to make people think we hate each other, but are actually just stupid double check. I found this one to be frightfully predictable. I Rowley and I cared more about the Twitter account drama than the central romance. And that's not a great sign for this reader. As a reminder from the last time though, Ali Hazelwood does write very open door sex scenes. These are not safe for Mindy, or for readers that have a Mindy sensibility about these things. Of course, those were some of the best parts of the book. So overall, I thought this was very humdrum. I hope she takes more time with her next book, because I think that that's what really benefited the love hypothesis. This was love on the brain by Ali Hazelwood.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 24:28**

Okay, Katie, one of the reasons I've been so excited to talk about books is because I've read a couple of books recently that have really, really, really been just very discussable books that made me say, automatically Who do I know who's read this book because I have to talk about it. And this one was one of them. This is stone blind, by Natalie Haines. She's the one who wrote A 1000 ships, which was really big a couple of years ago. These are Greek myth, retellings, and I love a Greek myth retelling almost

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 24:59**

As much they love a fairy tale retelling. So this is very much in my sweet spot Actually, I haven't read 1000 ships yet so this is my first one. Yeah, I'm definitely going to so stone blind though it just sucked me in from the very beginning. I'm going to give you just a little bit of the setup. And then talk to you a little bit about how I felt about the the only mortal in a family of Gods Medusa. This is Medusa story is the youngest of the Gorgon sisters. Unlike her siblings, Medusa grows older, she's not immortal. She experiences change, she feels weakness. Her mortal lifespan gives her an urgency that her sisters will never know when the sea god Poseidon assaults Medusa in thiness temple. The goddess Athena is enraged, furious by the violation of her sacred space. Athena takes revenge not on Poseidon who did the assaulting but on Medusa, the young woman who was assaulted, punished for besides actions Medusa is forever transformed, and I have a feeling we all know how she was transformed, writhing snakes replace her hair, her gaze will turn any living creature to stone curse with the power to destroy all she loves. With a single look, Medusa condemns herself to a life of solitude, until Perseus embarks upon a fatal quest to fetch the head of a Gorgon. Alright, so this is what we've got, right? This is I'm gonna put in air quotes, Medusa story. This is how I went into this book that this was Medusa story. My experience with reading this book was so strange from the beginning, I liked it from the beginning, I was really into it right from the start, and I was interested all the way through. But also I felt myself not necessarily wanting to rush back to it when I wasn't reading it. But the second that I did, I was totally drawn into the story and didn't want to stop reading interests like this very strange push pull, which I've had with very few books, the book that it kept reminding me of in vibes ways, in the way I just described with Lincoln in the Bardo, in the same way that stone blind does Lincoln in the Bardo, repeatedly kind of picked you up and set you down in new places, and new points of view and new narrative structures. So you never quite knew where you were going next. This isn't unpleasant in either one of those

stories. It's certainly not unpleasant in stone blank, but it is a little bit unsettling, never knowing exactly what is about to happen isn't, you know that that's not a real comfortable space for me, but I knew that I was in very sure and capable hands. The other part of this book that I wasn't expecting is that it is funny, as all get out, the conversations between the gods and the mortals had me absolutely cackling I laughed all the way through this book. We have to talk though, about the fact that this book has so many characters in it. Okay, this is not something that I normally struggle with at all. In fact, I welcome books with a large cast of characters here, though, I definitely noticed it and felt myself struggling with figuring out Wait, is this a character I'm going to see again? Or is this a character who I'm only going to meet once? Do I need to remember all of the details here? Or is this something that I can kind of just let flow by this is something that a lot of people who've read this book criticize it for. And so I felt that I absolutely had to mention it here. Because especially in the first half of the book, this was something that I was actively noticing about my reading. But I will say by the time the book ended, I felt like she had done a really good job of bringing together not only the how, but the why all of these different voices and points of view mattered individually. And together as a group, I really want to say that I feel like this would be a great book for book club. It is very enjoyable, it is very easy to read. It is imminently discussable. I was itching to have discussion all the way through not like just at the ending. But all the way through this would be a great buddy read, because the way she's writing what she's writing about the different characters themselves, they just demand to be commented on with a trusted bookish friend. I really, really loved this book, I want to give you just a quick sense of the kind of writing that we're talking about here. Because this tone that she sets, this is just the very beginning of the book is really emblematic of what you're going to get in stone blind. This chapter again, the very beginning is called the gorgonian. I see you I see all those who men call monsters and I see the men who call them that call themselves heroes. Of course, I only see them for an instant, then they're gone. But it's enough enough to know that the hero isn't the one who's kind or brave or loyal sometimes Not always but sometimes he is monstrous and the monster who is she she is what happens when someone cannot be saved. This particular monster is assaulted, abused and vilified. And yet, as the story is always told she is the one you should fear. She is the monster, we'll see about that. That piece just gives you a sense of what you're going to get in this story, which is just layers upon layers of fascinating story, characters, and different kinds of writing. I absolutely enjoyed this book so much. Please get you a bookish friend and read it together. This is stone blind by Natalie Haynes.

**Kaytee Cobb 30:43**

Okay, I am so excited that you talked about this one, my Katie was reading it and she sent me that first little blurb that you just read aloud to us. And that it gave me chills to read it the first time it gave me chills to hear you read it aloud. Again, I love as you know, twisting a myth on its head in order to center the female character. It's one of my very favorite things in literature.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 31:08**

The thing is that this book forces you to ask, but is the female character. We think this book is about being centered, right? This book really asks a lot of questions, and it switches points of view. And it's got some Greek chorus elements, and it's got some it's really, really fascinating. Again, I just can't tell you how much I feel like you should read it with other people because it's like a great group experience.

**Kaytee Cobb 31:36**

Do you feel like with regard to the characters, is there a character list? Would it be helpful to have a character list?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 31:42**

If there's a character list? It wasn't in my early arc, okay, that I received on my Kindle. Okay. They're very well, maybe I wouldn't it probably in the final version. And by the way, that cover is absolutely gorgeous. So I may very well order a copy of this. I'm going to convince Roxana to read it. And so so you need another copy. So you can flip through with her right. I'll probably do some rereading at that time and get a copy. But a character list would have been really helpful. Also, I'm glad that you said that. Katie, I want to say two more things. Lots of trigger warnings, you guys. I feel like the setup kind of led to No, but lots of trigger warnings for terrible things happening to women. Yeah, especially also, I do think I would read this in print, because I felt like I wanted to keep being able to turn back and forth, that would have added even more to my experience. That makes sense. Yeah. This is stone blind. By Natalie Haynes. Okay. All right, what's your third book,

**Kaytee Cobb 32:34**

okay, my third one is a very small book. But I really want to tell you about it. It's called for every one by my boyfriend, Jason Reynolds. He's got another book out. This is an old book. It's a few years old. I picked it up in early January, though, because I was in a bit of a funk about reading about starting a new year. And I wanted a quick win. But I also wanted some Jason Reynolds in my life, and I want to be a completest of his and so this one's a little bit backlist. It's a book of encouragement. For another year of living on this earth. It was perfection on every level. In fact, I sat down and read it again this morning, as I prepped for this episode, because I've had a tough week, as I mentioned, and this book speaks exactly to wherever you are, as long as you have a dream and something that you're working toward and wishing on Jason Reynolds introduces this small volume of poetry, which is kind of like a verse novel and kind of like a letter to himself and a letter to the reader. In verse, he starts by telling us that when he was 16, and he thought ahead to this time in his life, he assumed he would have it all figured out. And I don't care if you're listening to this, and you are 16 or 20, or 45, or 70, if you have it all figured out. I'd like to meet you, because I think that's part of being human. We all struggle with that we continue growing and striving and changing and learning how to love ourselves and others. Well, we achieve the thing, whatever it is, and we set our sights on a new horizon, something to reach for and grow towards Meredith and I do this all the time, it's really fun to reflect on the goals we've set for the podcast over the five years, because now some of them seem so little, but at the time, it seemed like a big deal to wonder if we could get to 100 downloads per episode, right? It's amazing. Jason says in this little book, I'd rather my appetite be wet by a teaspoon of almost there every now and then. I'd rather suffer from internal eczema constantly irritated by the itch of possibility. And in that way, this book is for everyone. The very first page inside the cover even says from two from two from two and then pass it on in really big text at the bottom, because it is an encouragement toward a dream and towards driving. So I passed on my copy to my friend Candace and I wrote our names inside the cover from Katie to Candice and then I bought myself a new copy so that I could keep it on my shelves that I will not pass along or that I will pass along but I'm going to pass it to myself often as a reminder on my shelf that I can pick up whenever I want that if something feels unattainable if something feels like a dream that I've been chasing for too long, that itch of possibility, that appetite for almost there. That's the stuff that

makes life work. If you read her if you listener, pick this up after I talk about it today, you can put my name on the front line from Katie to you, because it's also from Jason, to me to you. It's for everyone. So this was for every one by Jason Reynolds.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 35:27**

Oh, that's beautiful. That's wonderful. I'm glad that you went back in this back list and found that

**Kaytee Cobb 35:31**

Yeah, yeah, I think it's one of the first things he published but I love it.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 35:34**

I want to talk about a book that I actually read a few months ago but I wanted to wait until it without or close to being out to talk about it. And that time has come this is a book that is called all that is mine. I carry with me and it is by William Landbay. Here's the setup. One afternoon in November 1975 10 year old Miranda Larkin comes home from school to find her mother is missing. The police arrive later to find nothing out of place. There's no sign of a struggle. Their mom's wallet is in the front hall exactly where she always leaves that are no cell phones. It's 1975 or what we like to call the good old days of murdering folks.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 36:12**

So begins our story. What happened to Jane Larkin? Did she walk out and walk away from her perfect suburban life abandoning her husband and three children? It seems unlikely but it is possible. Again, no cameras, no any investigator soon suspect Jane's husband, because Dan Larkin is a criminal defense attorney by trade. So who better than to try to pull something off like this. But no evidence is found of a crime, let alone anything linking him to a crime. And the case fades from the public's memory and James three children, Alex, Jeff and Miranda are left to be raised by their father, who they each realize is also the man who may have murdered their mother. It's complicated to say the least. And then two decades later, the remains of Jane Larkin are found. And the investigation is reopened like one big gigantic can of worms and Jane's poor children who are now full grown adults, each with their own complicated lives and with complicated relationships with each other and their father are forced to choose sides. Are they with their father? Are they against him? Is he guilty? Or is he innocent? And did I say that all of this premise goodness is wrapped up in the fact that this is a legal thriller, legal drama, I love it. We all are looking for great legal dramas. And this is definitely one. This book is by William Landbay, who wrote several years ago, a book called Defending Jacob that you may remember, which is an excellent book. And we've been waiting for a really long time for a new book by him. This one actually was blurbed, also by Louise Penny, who loves his work. So if that holds weight with you know that the origin of the action, of course, is this mother character going missing. And it is absolutely a mystery. This book could be called a mystery because that mystery is fully explored. This book is also a legal drama, there is a court case, and it is interesting and well done. And it takes up the whole last third of the book. It is at its heart a family story, I would say a dysfunctional family story. But everything that goes on in this family is so like every other family that I feel like it would mean we are all dysfunctional families. So every family story is dysfunctional, which I guess is probably true. The pros here is excellent. And it swept me in right from the start. I really loved the way that William Landy introduces the characters. And I liked the construct of the book. It's told from several different points of

view. And each one surprised me. But the most interesting part of the book is the way that he uses the mystery, that core mystery of the missing mother to explore the dynamics within this family, not just when it happened, but tracing that over the course of the following year. The following three years, and then more than 30 years into the future. This was a completely propulsive and fast read, but it had lots of substance and you guys know that is my sweet spot as a mystery and thriller reader. I will say if you liked the local which I'll be talking about really soon, you will like this one. This book was just out last week and I highly recommend it. I should mention that it was recommended to me months ago by my number one recommendation source Elizabeth Barnhill and she knew it was a winner for her she knew it would be a winner for me I so appreciate that. She always makes sure that I know about quality books of all kinds but especially legal dramas, which is what we have here so this is very hard to remember title all that is mine I carry with me by William when de and if you like any sort of legal drama, you're definitely going to want to get this one.

**Kaytee Cobb** 39:57

Okay, that sounds good. I haven't read *Defending Jacob*. I know it's very much like part of the cultural conversation from 10 years ago, 20 years ago, but it's, it's very good.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 40:08

Okay, excellent. All right, kaytee Are you ready to get into our deep dive, which is boss my TBR?

**Kaytee Cobb** 40:14

Yes, I did a little digging in our history on this, Meredith and season three, Episode Six, we had a deep dive about being booked bossy. So now it's been like two and a half years, since that time, and here we are being booked bossy.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 40:28

Well, it may feel like we're, we I'll speak for myself. I feel like I'm booked bossy a lot. But a second word, boss and it. I mean, exactly. It's doubling down on our superpower. Okay. All right. So as we said, we put out a call on to our bookish friends group on Facebook for our Patreon subscribers. And we said, and this is actually one of the things that you get to do if you're a bookish friend is you know about this stuff before anybody else does. And you can possibly participate. So hundreds of people let us know that they sent in their comment saying, Here are five books from my TBR. We told them, we would pick a couple and we're going to do this with some regularity. Not every week, but we're going to do this with some regularity, where we will take those and we will whittle them down to three and tell you what order we think you should go in. So Kaytee, we haven't done this before. So we're figuring out our format as we go as we always do. All right. So do you want to so we have two people we have Kiara and Shawna, do you want to take Chiara and help? Tell us what books she has no. TBR and then give me your thought as to which one she should read in, in what order? And then I'll tell you what I think about that.

**Kaytee Cobb** 41:34

Okay, sure. All right. So our friend Kiara, she gave us these five books. The first one on her TBR is, and this is in no particular order, obviously, because we get to tell her the first one on her TBR is the bear and the Nightingale by Katherine Arden. This is the first in a series. I'm not gonna give all set up for all

the books but that's the first 1/9 house by Leigh Bardugo is the second one light from uncommon stars by Ryka. ioki is the third station 11 by Emily St. John Mandel is the fourth and the change by Kristen Miller is the fifth one though I have some thoughts about all of these. I have read all but one in their entirety and part of the fifth one. So I actually have like, I feel like pretty well versed thoughts on a lot of these.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 42:19

Okay, and let me ask you this. Do you know Kiara, because she's a she is a friend of mine. So I happen to know her personal taste. But do you know her personally,

**Kaytee Cobb** 42:27

I do not know her personally, of course, I've interacted with her in the past, and I have kind of a feel for her with these five. But I feel like this list says I like a fantastical element. But I also like the real world. I kind of took that into account when I was making my choices for her. Yep. So my choice is it keeps the bear in the nightingale as the first choice I put the change second, even though I did not like that book light from uncommon stars as third and then I have reasons why I didn't put ninth house on station 11 in those top three. Alright, so this is going to be an interesting conversation because I said that the order should be stationed 11/9 House light from uncommon stars. So exactly opposite of what I put back. Exactly. So tell me why those three I started with the bear in the nightingale because it has this really incredible sense of place and winter. I feel like the pages do a great job at encapsulating that and it's a very achievable length. It's 319 pages, but it's the first miniseries. So if you really love that world, you know, you've already knocked out the one book and you can keep going. I feel like it's a good, easy win to take off your TBR and then maybe add some more, but at least you check that one off. That's why I started with that one. And then I went to the change next. And again, I already said I didn't like this book, but most people really loved it. So I can accept that. I'm really an outlier here. It has incredible ratings, I've good reads. And that recommending it for Kiara is probably a good bet. It's also the chunkiest on the list, but not by much. So I feel like there's a lot of that talk in the cultural conversation right now that feminist rage Mary and I deep dived about that a few weeks ago, it is more likely than not that it will be a good fit for her even though it wasn't a good fit for me. And then finally, like from uncommon stars, we both put this 1/3 for this one. I really love to go to kiara and ask her if she likes music. For instance, did she pick up the violin conspiracy by Brendon Slocum when it was buzzing everywhere? Because if so, the music element is what really pulled me into this one, and it's firmly in our world. But also there's aliens and a deal with the devil. It's so fantastic and so repulsive and a little bit weird and quirky. So I like that one in third spot.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 44:34

All right. So I don't disagree with any of the things that you said. So all five of these books, I think are ones that carriers should definitely read Yes, is an embarrassment of riches. And I actually think that not only will she read them, I think that she will like station 11 Feels like a book that she should just read because it's quick. It's not very long. And it's one of those books that I feel like pretty much everyone should read just because it's one of those books that I feel like everyone should read. It's not one of my favorite books of all Time, but it's very good. And for a lot of people, it is one of their favorite books of all time. So it just felt like a box that a readerly box that she should check and actually think she might like it quite a bit. And then I really think that she will like ninth house quite a bit. I think that this was an indie

presses choice. So we've read portions of this the vibe of ninth house, the lead character of ninth house I think will be especially good for Chiara I happen to know that about her so that's why I really wanted that on this list. The other thing is, and this is I quickly realized was going to be an issue for me as I'm kind of making this order is that I am such a seasonal reader that because Kiara lives here with me. She doesn't live with me in the same house.

**Kaytee Cobb** 45:40

But that would be an interesting twist. That would be would be new announcement.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 45:45

Remember the fight I told you about at the beginning of the episode. I live a bookish right now. Exact No, but she lives here in the Austin area. And so I know that we are now in the 90s winter is over in Austin. It's summer the 90s it's summertime.

**Kaytee Cobb** 45:57

That's gross.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 45:58

Yes. Well, you can say it's gross or you can just embrace summer for the next nine months. Oh, in whole hog. So I feel like the change she should put off until it's real. We're in fake summer right now. It's real summer over the summer. It just feels like a really good summer kind of feminist rage bucket. I do think that she will like that one. And then I think bear night and gal she should put off for the two weeks of winter that we will have next December.

**Kaytee Cobb** 46:22

Yeah. When you guys get your next Ice Storm.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 46:24

Exactly. All of those books are going to be good ones. But those were our different considerations.

**Kaytee Cobb** 46:29

Okay, so as a final like contrast here, the reason I put station 11 Last is because it came out in 2014. And it was really big at that time. So I feel like there's one of two things happening here with Kiara either Kiara didn't have it on her radar at the time. And the recent screen adaptation of it has pushed up her TBR. Or it's not actually that interesting to her. And she thinks she should read it

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 46:53

because she should.

**Kaytee Cobb** 46:54

That's what readers do.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 46:55

Because it is true. That is right.

**Kaytee Cobb 46:57**

Like it like there's a should element there. If she didn't care about it for nine years. Why is it now important, which is why it ended up on the bottom of my list. I'm not saying it's not a good book. I think it's a great book, but I don't think it's right, oppressing for her. And then ninth house again, you're right indie press list pick in May of 2022. It's the only one I haven't finished. I've read 20% of it. And I really like it. That one was just suffered from an embarrassment of riches. I think I liked the other three a little bit more for her. But I could absolutely be convinced to put that one higher up in my list if we had to come to a consensus.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:32**

Well, let's talk a little bit about the books that we got from bookish friends Shawna rally Williams so her five books were these 1122 63 by Stephen King, Lonesome Dove by Larry McMurtry Parable of the Sower by Octavia Butler, the 10,000 doors of January by Aleksey Harrow and the House of the Scorpion by Nancy farmer. That's middle grade. Yeah, that look that one. It's why it's why Okay, yeah. Okay. I mean, this one felt easier to meet Kaytee, this one was the first one I was able to do.

**Kaytee Cobb 48:02**

Yeah, this one felt easier to me,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:03**

because there's three books on here that I just feel are Paragons in their genre. But all five of these could be said to be Paragons in their genre. But for me, it's 1122 63 Lonesome Dove and 10,000 doors in January. Now you guys know that 10,000 doors was my favorite book of last year. Clearly, I am totally biased and then Lonesome Dove. I am not a Western person at all. It is fantastic. It is perfect. As you get into summer again, that's feels very seasonal to me. And then 1122 63 is just one of those books that will surprise you. It will just blow your mind. It's incredibly propulsive. It's a big chunky, but it's also a page turner. It's Stephen King at its best. So for me, those three just felt like oh, man, if you haven't read those three, just I'm so jealous. That's how I felt.

**Kaytee Cobb 48:50**

Yes, I agree. I'm 100% with you on two of those three, lots of love. For me, typical of writing at the time is really hard on women. They're like women being scalped and murdered and sexually assaulted page after page after page. It's a tough read. And it's long, and so is 1122 63. So of the two of them, I put 1122 63 above. And there's hard stuff that happens to women in that one too. There's physical abuse. There's all kinds of things happening there. Also, it didn't feel quite as relentless to me, but it's a combined Fave like, yes, put that one high on the TBR. So to swap for your Lonesome Dove I put Parable of the Sower because it's different from all the rest of these, it's dystopian. It's the start of a two book series, and it has some of those darker vibes that we see in all of these pics. I think 10,000 doors of January is not a light book by any means. But it's the lightest of all of these. So I would put maybe 1122 63 10,000 doors to lighten up a little bit. And then Parable of the Sower as my third one because you're gonna get back into a little bit of darkness at that point.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 49:56

Okay, actually, you've completely changed my mind on that one and I think your exam actually right I think those should be the three and that should be the order. Excellent. Yay. I win this round. You absolutely do. You totally made some great points. All right good. What do you guys think of this segment? We know that you want to tell us so let us know if you want us to do this and again, we're not going to do it's not like we're gonna just once a month but I'm just saying Do you want to see this kind of discussion? Is there a spin on it that you would like to see we're always looking for new and fun things to do as deep dive so let us know what you think

**Kaytee Cobb** 50:27

we know they will they will people have a lot of opinions about what should be happening on this show. We love it.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 50:31

We love it. All right. Kaytee, what is your wish for the fountain this week?

**Kaytee Cobb** 50:35

Okay, I have a wish that is pure fun this week. I have no marketing ideas for you. I wish to make sure that everyone is following at Goodreads underscore reviews on Instagram. I love this account so much. So I don't know why it's so funny to me. But this is just an account that repost screenshots of one star reviews from Goodreads. These might be totally unknown books they might be huge blockbusters. It includes classics and Kindle Unlimited reverse harem romances every for instance, a one star review of Anne of Green Gables the entire text of this review is sorry, Mom, there's another book. It's something called All I want for Christmas. And the review says these two have the communication skills of worms. I cannot even it's like everything I ever wanted in the terrible reviews on Goodreads but all collated into one place I even love when I see a book featured that I really loved. It's okay if it pans a book that I adore, like Lobiniza, I found one, one star, if you call eyes, any gemstone color orbs one more time. And it just trails off. Like yeah, yes. Accurate. Yes. And also I love that book. Great. Yeah, it's hilarious to me. It's true. And therefore I had to wish with a pink and a splash for all of you to go follow good reads underscore reviews on Instagram this week.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 51:52

All right, that's a good one. Do follow that and it is fun. It's several times it's made me laugh out loud. My wish is that everyone would read or read to the small one in their life, the 13 story Treehouse series by Andy Griffiths. So we are firmly in middle grade March. And it has me thinking about some of my favorite middle grade reads, along with some of my favorite read alouds with my kids and the other day, I can't remember where but someone mentioned the 13 story Treehouse series, Jackson, and I read this when he was six. And we both loved it. We read three of the books together and then he started listening to them on audio, as some of his very first audio book listens. And he got so far into the series. There are 12 books total and each one is funnier and sillier than the last Andy and Terry there are lead characters in the series. They live in a treehouse, but it is not just any old Treehouse, it is the most amazing treehouse in the world. In the first story, the treehouse has 13 stories that has a bowling alley a see through swimming pool, a secret underground laboratory and a marshmallow machine that follows you around and automatically shoots marshmallows into your mouth. Whenever you are hungry

life I need this. I know the whole series is about little gems like that, that little kids are like, Oh, that would be the best thing in the world. Are you kidding me? So life would be perfect for Andy and Terry if it wasn't for the fact that they have to write their next book, which is almost impossible, because this Treehouse is filled with distractions including flying cats, giant bananas, mermaids, sea monsters that pretend to be mermaids, enormous gorillas and dangerous burp gas, bubblegum bubbles. They are so silly, and they have so much fun. And Terry Denton's numerous illustrations make this a really easy read aloud. We used to lay just back on Jackson's pillow and I would have the book up in front of us I would read and we would look at the illustrations and they also make it great early chapter books for burgeoning readers. And just remembering those times puts such a smile on my face that I wanted to be sure that we weren't forgetting about this fantastic series. This is the tree house series by Andy Griffiths and Terry Denton starting with the 13 story treehouse.

**Kaytee Cobb** 54:06

So if there's 13 stories in the first book, and there's 12 in the series, does it go all the way down to one?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 54:13

No, it goes 1326 39

**Kaytee Cobb** 54:17

Oh, multiples of 13. Yes. Interesting. Yeah. Okay.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 54:21

Right. Really, really, really fun series, so absolutely love it. 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 dot reads on Instagram.

**Kaytee Cobb** 54:34

And you can find me kaytee at notes on bookmarks on Instagram 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 currently reading podcast.com. You can also follow the show at currently reading podcast on Instagram or email us at currently reading podcast@gmail.com And if you want more of this content, join us as a bookish friend for just \$5 a month. You can join us anytime at

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 55:00

You get access to tons of new content and our bookish friends group on Facebook. You can also help us by rating and reviewing us on Apple podcasts and chatting us out on social media. Every one of those things helps us to build our perfect audience. Yes, bookish friends are the best friends. Thank you all for helping us grow and get closer to our goals. Alright, until next week, may your coffee be hot and your book be unputdownable. Happy reading Katie.

**Kaytee Cobb** 55:24

Happy reading Meredith