



# Season 5, Episode 35: Mysteries and Romance + Books We Want to Own

Mon, Apr 10, 2023 • 53:43

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:10

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

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:24

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

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:33

I'm Meredith Monday Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas, and I love bookish surprises.

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:40

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four, living in New Mexico, and I love when my mojo returns. This is episode number 35 of season five, and we are so glad you're here.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:51

Oh, Kaytee, I love it when your mojo returns too.

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:54

I needed it in a bad way.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:56

Yes, you did. Absolutely. That makes me so happy. Okay, so we are going to let you know right here at the top that we are going to talk today about what qualifies a book as a book that Kaytee and I want to own instead of just have it passed through us temporarily in one way or another. So that's going to be our deep dive later on. But before we do that, let's start out the way we always do with our bookish moments of the week. What have you got Kaytee?

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:23

Yes, Meredith, I can't wait to celebrate a little bit the fact that my reading Mojo has returned. I'm not 100% yet, but I am like sufficiently on the mend to be at a point where I can celebrate. And I'm feeling that core reader identity start to come back. So I wanted to talk about a little bit because I identified three things that I think really played into me being able to get back into my regular groove. So first

was the recording that we did last week. And with our surprise, current reads, I was really anxious about that, and how it would go but it was so fun. We just had a really good time and we like felt accomplished when we finished it. And that book talk was really good for me good. Got me into a good headspace. I was grateful. Right after we finished that episode, I also finished my Kindle book, and an audio book that I've been working on for a while. So I started to clear my slate and get to choose new read that better matched the headspace I was in. And finally of course, I spent this past week prepping for the April Indie Press List episode. We've talked about this before, but it requires both of us sitting in front of a stack of five or in this case six books chosen by an indie bookstore that spans a broad swath of reading taste. It's like a tasting menu and we're allowed to just dip in and out of books or devour them completely depending on how the mood takes us. So this week, gave me that combo upgrade book talk out cleared slate of current reads and the IPL preview experience in a way that really worked reading back into my life in a tangible way and got those Mojo juices flowing, which is a gross phrase, my province to never say mojo juices again after that one. Right.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:05**

All right. Yes. Bad phrase. Well, good. Well, I mean, all of those things make sense to me. It is worth noting that this month for the Indie Press List our store is Parnassus Books in Nashville, Tennessee. And they gave us a we expected nothing less of course, but we got a great stack. So yes, we were lucky enough to be able to work for work with them. And it was really, really exciting was really fun to see what books they thought we might like and I guarantee you our bookish friends who are the people who support us for \$5 month that's who gets the Indie Press List every month right into their normal feed. They were gifted with a really really interesting stack.

**Kaytee Cobb 03:47**

Interesting is a great word for

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:48**

yes but also but like an interesting one good yes, yeah, yes, yes. No, for sure. Not interesting as a code word for right anything else all right. My bookish moment of the week Kaytee, you already know about this this bookish moment of the week. I went to had a really busy week this week I mean an especially busy week this week and at one point I got a message saying that my Fabled, that an order from Fabled had come and so I was like okay, you know what, I'm just gonna go drive to the mailbox and get it because I need a little pick me up. So I went because I knew my favorite books there so I went and got it came back I had I knew I had four new releases from their their winter book review that had just come out so super excited. But in that in the mailbox with that box from Fabled was another box. It was rainy that day, Kaytee, this matters in the story. Because it had been rainy and the package this mystery package was kind of a material that when I looked at because it had a label saying that it was for me, but the other part of it had been written on by like a pen like a fountain pen or regular pen. And because it felt like it felt tip pen. Exactly. Not. It's not right. 1874. So they, and so I was like, huh, I know it's to me, but I don't know who it's from. That's weird. So I started opening it up in my car because I just have no, no cool whatsoever. And it was three books. But the top book was the new book from Lauren Groff, which does not come out until September, I believe. It's called the vaster, the vast Wilds... The Vaster Wilds. I screamed, I absolutely screamed in my car. And I was like, Who the heck sent me. And then there were two other books, which were completely my tastes, I'd never heard of them, but they were

completely my taste. So I was doing everything I could to figure it out. Suffice it to say, through a lot of detective work, I finally found out that it was our dear friend Bunmi Ishola who went to Winter Institute, and was grabbing arcs like a maniac, and apparently, she grabbed that one just for me. And she got my address from you, and sent it to me. And it was so kind and so surprising. I am going on a reading retreat this next week. That is going to be the first book that I allow myself to dip into because I will have uninterrupted time. I'm so excited.

**Kaytee Cobb** 06:24

Yes, I love a bookish surprise also, which sometimes my short term memory like plays in my favor there because somebody will say, "Hey, I want to send you this book". And then when I get it, I'm like, "Oh, what's this? Like what happened here?", but you really had no idea because it all came through Bunmi, through me. So it was a legitimate surprise. My package from Bunmi also came on a rainy day and there was some damage to the books because of it. But it was still so exciting to find the ones that she had chosen just for me, knowing my tastes having been a listener for years, even before she joined our Patreon team. It was so fun. I love I love that experience.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 07:00

Yes, because surprises are the best. So Bunmi Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for being such a good friend to us. Okay Kaytee. Let's talk about some of our current reads. Now this week we have you all will be very glad to know we have prepared this week. So relax. We're not going to do what we did last week to you.

**Kaytee Cobb** 07:21

Okay, the first one I want to talk about this week is called To Catch a Raven by Beverly Jenkins. This is the third book in the Women Who Dare series by Beverly Jenkins. I brought the first one which is called Rebel to the show in 2020 and finally picked up another one from it, which was also fantastic. This one has a delectable mystery heist element at the center that kept me listening at Uber speed to see how it turned out. This is a romance mystery that takes place just after the Civil War. Raven Moreaux is our main character. She's a con artist, a grifter. She is damn proud of it. But when the government recruits her to help steal back a copy of the Declaration of Independence from a former Confederate official, she is not happy about it. She does not want to do like official government things with her worldly talents. Basically, she was paired up with Braxton Steele. And yes, that could be the name of a porn star. We aren't going to discuss it. Braxton is hot spelled H A W T and he comes from the upper echelon of free Black society. He's the equivalent of Black landed gentry and is used to the finer things in life. He always has nice clothes, he has usually had servants working for him throughout his life. So he and Raven are from very different social sects as they get to know each other. In this con, he is required to pose as Raven's husband, and they go to the home of this former Confederate official to take work as a housekeeper and valet driver pair. Now again, this is post Civil War, but the family here would prefer to pretend that nothing has changed and treat these servants that they're paying now like they are still enslaved persons. Braxton and Raven use their access to the home to investigate the whereabouts of the stolen copy of the declaration. And in the meantime, as the blurb says, their pretend marriage ignites into a fiery passion. And fiery is the word here. This book had me sweating as I putted around my sister's house in February when it is not hot. I was installing a ceiling fan and I kept thinking thing I better get this thing connected real quick so I can lay on the floor and make sure it works

correctly because holy God what is happening. This level of steam is not to be trifled with. And Beverly Jenkins writes that sexual tension turned sexual intimacy perfectly. I have only one left in this series of three and I'm sad about it because both of these other two have been huge hit for me five stars each for historical romance that has a little bit more depth to it. We've got this spy element in this one the first one. Rebel is about free Black schools it was they're just really interesting, like historical tidbits woven in, and I loved it. So I'll have to save Wild Rain, which is the other one for a true mood boost. As always with romance and series, you might get a little touch point back to other couples but reading it out of order is completely fine. It does not make you an animal. Which is why today I brought you To Catch a Raven, number three in the Women Who Dare series by Beverly Jenkins.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 10:27

So if you had to give this a number on the spicy scale, where would you put it?

**Kaytee Cobb** 10:31

This one I like I don't usually sweat just in general, but certainly not when I'm reading. I would put this solidly at an eight out of 10 out of 10. Okay, yeah, so it it definitely had quite a few like eggplant emojis or chili peppers or however you like to denote your spiciness on my reading tracker.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 10:52

All right. Very, very good to know. Why would you skip the second one and go to the third one?

**Kaytee Cobb** 10:58

Because it was Black History Month. And I wanted a black author with spicy romance. And so I just started searching people that I have had before. And this one was immediately available. And I and it didn't matter to me whether it was just one that I hadn't read yet. So I got it. Okay, and whatever,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 11:14

right. And it's not a series that needs to be read in order. Got it. Okay, that makes sense. Okay. All right, Kaytee, I am going to talk about another book that rates pretty high up in the spicy scale. And I loved it. I am going to talk about A Court of Silver Flames by Sarah J. Maas.

**Kaytee Cobb** 11:32

I almost chose those one last week when I got to choose your current reads. I cannot wait to hear about it. Yes.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 11:37

I love it. Love it. Love it. Okay, here's the setup. Because this is the fourth in the series, it is almost impossible to set this up and have it make any sense. So take all of this with a grain of salt, right? So this book, again, the fourth in the series, definitely a series that needs to be read in order, or you're just simply not going to know what's going on. This particular book focuses on a couple of characters that have been in all of the previous books, so we know them well. But they haven't been centered until now. We've got prickly Nesta Archeron. She's an angry mess when we start this book. She's traumatized by recent events, and she's acting out in very self destructive ways. You do want to shake her but you also completely understand because girl has been through it. And then we have my heart

Cassian the battle scarred warrior who's predictably hot, very hot H A W T, and who drives Nesta crazy. He irritates her, but also she's super hot for him. So you know, we have this as a thing. Meanwhile, the baddies are being bad again, and the whole gang has to get together and work together to save the world. This is also a whole thing. All right. So that's a not very good setup for a book that I simply can't set up without ruining other things. And this is one of my favorite series of all time. It's on my forever shelf. We'll talk about that later, to everyone's surprise, so super important that I don't spoil anybody's fun. This fourth in a series was a five star book. After I close the book, I knew it was going to take me a while to gather my words because I loved it so much. To be able to say that I loved a fourth in a series as much as any of the first three is really, really incredible. And it's it's hard to fully explain why this series is so excellent without giving away too much. But if I had to name a few things about this particular novel that I really loved, I would say number one, the Nesta character. I went into this book with a little bit of side eye for the Nesta character. I just wasn't sure I wanted her to be centered in the book. She is very she's a lot. Nesta is a lot. She is the silver flame to beauty. Her journey through her trauma is the heart of the story. And it is done incredibly well. Sarah J Maas doesn't rush through to recovery, where I think other authors, especially other authors writing YA fantasy might. Nesta's path is hard and dark and I felt it so deeply. I as I've discussed went through an unraveling in 2018 that had me in a dark place for a year. And as I read this story, I was nodding my head and understanding of the horrible ways that Nesta's mind was still sabotaging her. The second thing I loved about this particular book was the female friendship element in this story. Again, I can't go into much detail but that friendship and the incredible power that they found because of it was one of my favorite elements not just of this book, but of the entire series. Sarah J Maas believes as I do that women are powerful and even more so together and she illustrates that in this story in some incredibly memorable, heart pounding ways. Third, the theme of forgiveness resonates through the story of forgiving others, but much more so of forgiving yourself when you've really done horrible things. This theme runs deep through A Court of Silver Flames. And it had me really thinking a lot about what people in places in myself I need to forgive. And finally, the house, there's a house in the story that figures prominently aiding in Nesta's recovery in the best ways. It made me fantasize about having a house that is alive in a way that brings you food, exactly the food that you need, and the books that are exactly perfect for you. And then runs special, medicated and perfumed baths for you. Just a house that magically cares for you. I will be fantasizing about this element for a long time. And the sex is great. Don't get me wrong, there's plenty of it, but not so much that every chapter you're reading a sex scene. I like that Maas doesn't make it all about that particular thing. But just a reminder that this is a spice level of eight out of 10. For me, the world building, of course in the entire series is wonderful. And in this novel, Sarah J. Maas shows us some beautiful places, but also some truly horrible ones. And she writes each with great detail and skill. This is a series that brought Roxanna and me together, we always enjoy our time in Prythian so much and it will forever hold a special place in our reading partnership. We are banking on the hope that there will be more in this series because we just don't want it to be over. This was A Court of Silver Flames, the fourth book in the Court of Thorns and Roses series by Sarah J. Maas.

**Kaytee Cobb** 16:50

So fun. I'm so glad that you brought that one to the big show. And that we get to like continue your journey through this series with you. One of my favorite Sarah J. Maas fan girls, Candace has let me know that her middle name is Janet, which is of course why she goes with J instead on the cover. So

now when I you know, think about plot twists that really like get me going. I'm like "Sarah Janet, how dare you?"

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:19**

How do you do it? Right? It's so great. And these books, I mean, this book is 750 pages.

**Kaytee Cobb 17:25**

And it goes down so fast.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 17:27**

We read it so fast. And we were just delightedly squealing to each other as we were leaving messages to each other all the way through. I do have to say we have put you know time in between the books each time. And we continue to believe that that's the best way for us to read series like this because then every time we go back, it's really fresh. And it doesn't feel formulaic. And so we just absolutely love it. So such a good one. All right, Kaytee, what's your next one?

**Kaytee Cobb 17:55**

Okay, first, I want to add one more thing, which is that this series has one of my favorite sexy time things that ever happens in books. And it's happened in a few of my other favorite books, which is surrounded by books, sexy times surrounded by books. There's a library in Beach Read by Emily Henry. There's a library situation there that I love. The only scene I've super loved in Bridgerton. And here in A Court of Silver Flames, we also have a scene like that. And that is like the one scene that I wish I could read over and over again.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 18:28**

Yes, yes, it's very book. Well, I mean in books figure prominently because like I said, the house in order to help Nesta heal keeps giving her like she's, she's so traumatized that sometimes the only thing she can do to calm herself down is to get lost in a book. And this magic house keeps bringing exactly the right book to her and it's very comforting.

**Kaytee Cobb 18:47**

Yes, definitely. Okay. My second book this week is one that we had on the indie press list a few months ago. It's The Storyteller's Death by Ann Davila Cardinal. This book has some of my other favorite elements that do not include library sex in its pages and that made it a winner for me. It was brought to the indie press list by Schuler Books in Michigan. And I was captured from the first few sentences, which say, "There was always some old woman dying in the back room when I was a child. These women were just an expected part of the decor, like a lamp or a coffee table. I didn't know who most of them were... one anxious relative or another, and each summer, I would usually find a new inhabitant." How could you not want to read more of that? Here's what we find. Isla grew up in the US, but after her father died young, her mother started sending her back to her native island to Puerto Rico each summer. When these first sentences take place, were meeting Isla at age eight. It's 1970, and she's starting to really get a feel for the island. We follow Isla through the years, but the plot really starts to move when she turns 18. And her grandmother dies that summer. Isla's grandmother was a great storyteller, the kind that brings you into the room where the action is happening. With just her words

and tone of voice, but it's a bit more than that. This novel brings in an element of magical realism, and that Isla receives her grandmother's gift upon her death. And she figures it out when she starts hearing monkeys outside the window and running across the roof that no one else can hear. So begins the real crux of our story. Isla has to piece together the elements of the stories that she is seeing take place around her in order to figure out what needs to be done with them. When the story starts to become a little more intense, it's obvious that the one that centers around a murder will have to be solved or it could cost Isla her life. It's a cross of the power of story and the ways we pass stories between generations. This book examines the ways that our memories can haunt us like ghosts and work their ways into our lives and into our dreams. I love a coming of age story. I love a book about the power of story and how they shape us, especially like generational family stories. I love hearing my mom tell stories about her grandma, which is four generations ago for me, right? But I love knowing those stories. If you love stories like that, please also pick up *The Last Cuentista* by Donna Barbra Higuera, one of my favorite books about the power of stories. If that one was a hit for you as an adult reader, but you're okay without a sci fi element, I think you will love this one as well. It's *The Storyteller's Death* by Ann Davila Cardinal.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 21:26

That book is absolutely beautifully, beautifully written. I'm so glad that you brought that one to the show. That's so pretty.

**Kaytee Cobb** 21:33

I loved it. Yes.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 21:35

So so good. All right. All three of my books that I'm bringing today are very, very different and that always makes me happy when I feel like I'm not bringing three you know, similar books okay, because left turn from my last one. I'm bringing a book called *The Agathas* by Kathleen Glasgow and Liz Lawson. Here's the setup. And this YA mystery has a predictably juicy setup. Last summer, Alice Ogilvy's basketball star boyfriend, Steve dumped her. And then Alice disappeared for five days. And she comes back, but now she's not telling anyone where she went or what happened. And so of course, it is the biggest mystery in Castle Cove. Isn't it such a teenager thing to do? That is until another one of Steve's girlfriends vanishes Brooke Donovan, Alice's ex best friend. And there's reason to think that Brooke is gone for good. Enter our main character, Iris Adams. She's Alice's tutor and the police are convinced that Steve is the culprit. But Alice is not so sure. And with Iris on her side, she just might be able to prove this theory. In order to figure out who killed Brooke Donovan, they have to rely on their smarts, their knowledge of all the parties involved, and their secret weapon. The complete works of Agatha Christie. If there's anyone who can teach the girls how to solve a mystery, it's the master herself. But of course in a town where girls go missing every few days, Castle Cove holds many secrets. And Alice and Iris have no idea how much danger they're about to walk into.

**Kaytee Cobb** 23:10

Why do girls go missing every few days? Is this *Three Pines* for YA people?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 23:14

Well, I mean, you know Alice is missing then she comes back and then we've got Brooke gone. So yes, it happens. All right. This is a really fun, young adult mystery. This is totally for fans of Holly Jackson and Maureen Johnson of the Truly Devious fame. I love that after a slightly slow start, where we have to wade through some character development, which does involve teenage drama, we were really off to the races in a well plotted fast moving surprisingly intricate mystery. I totally enjoyed too of course, the way that they wove in Agatha Christie and the two lead characters shared love of her novels into the story. For this mega fan, the Easter eggs were a delight. There were lots of twists and turns and I was interested the entire time. This is a fast read, this is not going to take you long, I will say that I felt that the book was about 20% longer than it absolutely needed to be. And I wonder if the fact that it had two authors might have had a part of a part in that, like they both needed to get some of their ideas across. It just felt a little bit bloated, but it never drove the pot into the ground to the point where I didn't want to finish. It clipped along nicely and I enjoyed seeing how everything was going to come together. I should definitely mention that there are scenes depicting domestic abuse and the fallout that can happen from that. So I want to make sure that you're aware of that. From the ending, which wraps up the case perfectly well, it does seem that they're going to make this into a series of books and I would be perfectly fine dipping into their world again sometime in the future. Part Agatha Christie, part Veronica Mars and completely entertaining is what Liz McManus said about this book and I think that she is spot on. This is the Agathas by Kathleen Glasgow and Liz Lawson

**Kaytee Cobb** 25:01

So fun. I'm trying to picture I feel like I can picture the cover of this one and it's graphic and vibrant. I think I first heard about it on Diving In. Does that feel right to you?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 25:11

That might be. I know that I found it just at my library, just bookish library, serendipity, Mary Heim, if you're listening, this is definitely going to be a book for you, friend. Perfect. Love it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 25:23

Okay. My third one also, like we're just kind of spanning a whole bunch of different genres here, but I do have some YA that's scary, too.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 25:35

love it. I love it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 25:36

This one's called The Taking of Jake Livingston by Ryan Douglass. This was an absolute impulse buy for me at Changing Hands bookstore in Tempe, Arizona, which I tried to go to every time I visit my parents. I literally picked it up for the cover. And I knew I would read it when I was ready to be scared. It has a Black boy on the cover eyes wide, with spectral hands reaching around the sides of his head like blue kind of glowy looking hands, who has a little red subtitle on the front that says fear will find you. Sold... like I didn't even need to know anything else about it. But I do need to tell you all right at the top here, I'm going to give a pretty difficult trigger warning for this book that you might even end up skipping the rest of my setup., part of the blurb. A school shooting is a very big part of the plot here. It doesn't



happen during the narrative, but we do meet the shooter and hear from his point of view, especially based on the events that have been happening really recently with regard to when we're recording, I feel beholden to mention that right here at the top. Yep, that was almost enough to make me lay this down. Because truth be told, there's not ever a really good time to read a book that has a school shooting as the core of its narrative. There's nothing fun or fictional about it. So I wanted to address that here at the top. However, if you are like me, and you process real world stuff through fictional stories, which a lot of us do, this might be something you'll consider picking up. You'll also need to be ready for some horror and some ghosts. So let's get to the setup of this ya paranormal horror novel, Jake Livingston, our main character is attending St. Clair Prep, and he was one of the only Black kids there along with his older brother. He already has a tough time fitting in. But of course, it gets complicated when you add in the fact that Jake can see ghosts. He sees the dead around him constantly, but most of them are harmless and don't interact with him or other people. They are reliving their deaths in a loop. And it's hard for him to witness but it doesn't physically impact him in any way. But then Jake meets Sawyer and his ghost is a little different. As I mentioned at the top here, Sawyer is the perpetrator of a school shooting that happened at a local high school last year. He killed six students before taking his own life. He is more powerful than most of the ghosts that Jake meets. And he's also more violent with a taste for revenge. As Sawyer's ghost starts haunting Jake, bodies, real life bodies start to pile up in his neighborhood in Jake's neighborhood. And there's literal writing on the walls in blood that Jake is going to have to figure out how to deal with before Sawyer puts his family in danger, or he loses his own life. This book is intense on a lot of levels. I listened to at least 75% of it with a horrified expression on my face, as I drove two hours to and from Albuquerque and listened at 3x. So that was like six hours of the road book. Right? That's 75%. I'm sure my fellow drivers on the road would have been really concerned about me if they took a peek as we passed each other. If you are looking for a way to horrify yourself, this book is the ticket. It is so propulsive, you have to know what's going to happen. Right at the top. I already passed it along to a friend who has a young adult that's about 20 years old, just starting college that loves to get freaked out. Goodreads recommends this one for people who love Tiffany D. Jackson. Yes. And Kalynn Bayron. Both of these have been on the show before and they are great comps for this story. I liked it. I also hated it a little bit because of how much it like got under my skin. But easily four stars because I cannot stop thinking about it. And this was like maybe January or February when I read it. And now we're recording in April. So it was so good. So scary. And so interesting. This was The Taking of Jake Livingston by Ryan Douglass.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 29:35

I just wonder Kaytee if there're going to be a lot of people who are saying I might be interested, but not if the school shooter villain who still seems to have some sort of power is still powerful by the end. Is there a good way to tell us that piece of it?

**Kaytee Cobb** 29:55

By the end of this story, I was no longer terrified. Okay, like it resolved well.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 30:04

Okay, good.

**Kaytee Cobb** 30:05

But it took a while to get there.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 30:07

Okay. Yeah, no, definitely that's a that's a proceed with caution reader know thyself kind of recommendation. I think you've done a really great job of letting people know what they will find there. They're not going to step into it accidentally, so totally. Okay, I am bringing a book that I absolutely loved and it's very different from all the books I've talked about before. This is *The Future is Yours* by Dan Frey. Here's the setup. This novel asks us to consider the question if you had the chance to look one year into the future, would you? Our lead characters are 20 something young men and longtime friends Ben Boyce and Adhi Chaudry, and they are betting everything that the answer to that question for you is yes. Together tech genius Adhi and charismatic money guy Ben create a company called The Future, which by the way would be impossible for anyone to trademark but totally in the book this is what it's called. It's called The Future. And they have created a computer that connects to the internet one year from now, so that you can see who you'll be dating, where you'll be working, even whether or not you'll be alive in the year to come. These two former Silicon Valley outsiders create the world's newest buzziest unicorn. And soon all their financial and fame related dreams are coming true. Everyone wants a piece of this new company. Their device predicts everything from stock market spikes and sports scores to political scandals and corporate takeovers. And this information allows them to chase down success and fame while continually staying one step ahead of the competition. But soon their device foretells a future that is bad, like end of the world bad. But the money and the fame is so tempting. What will they do? What would you do? Told through emails, text transcripts and blog posts. This is my favorite kind of tech thriller, one that wonders if we individually have the strength to resist our own worst desires. Okay, this book is a wild ride. This is another total page turner but in a very different way from the Agathas. I found this book when I was doing my obsessive deep dive into mixed media novels. Those are of course novels that are told in different forms like emails, transcripts, reports. And this book is a great example of the genre. This is mixed media sci fi and again, a total page turner. I had never heard of it before. But I am so glad that I dipped into it because it was fascinating. If you love books that give you a behind the scenes look into a large and famous company, especially Silicon Valley unicorns, this book will be for you. If you love books that help us imagine the consequences of large leaps forward in technical abilities, then this book will be for you. If you like books that really deep dive on friendship and how friendship can be affected by life circumstance, like being worth \$3 billion overnight, then this book will be fascinating to you. Although this book is told entirely in mixed media and does not have a unifying exposition. I never got tired of it. It's not choppy, it tells the story in a smooth, logical way. Without making you work too hard to figure out what's going on. I was endlessly interested in what was going to happen and was thoroughly satisfied by the ending. Note that this book is right now in development as an HBO Max original series, which seems perfect. If you love the books by John Marrs or Blake Crouch, this is a backlist novel that you will want to try. This is *The Future is Yours* by Dan Frey.

**Kaytee Cobb** 33:50

Sounds so good. And I love near future sci fi thrillers might have to get my hands on the fun.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 33:56**

Yeah, I really liked it. I really liked it. All right, Kaytee. So those are our current reads. So let's get a little bit into our deep dive, which is a question that we got about how do we decide what books we keep instead of just giving them away and all the different ways that giving them away returning to the library, sending them back to Kindle Unlimited. Kaytee, how does a book make it to your forever shelf?

**Kaytee Cobb 34:25**

This is complicated. My forever shelf is constantly being reevaluated and evolving. My my first step and I think this is the first step for a lot of readers is if I finished a book and I'm like, Oh, I love this. If there's any kind of moaning or sighing right very end, I will at least tuck it on to my forever shelf and maybe alphabetize it in later and actually make space for it. But I'm always walking by that shelf. Y'all know my bookshelves are right outside our main bedroom and her house. So I walk by them over and over again all times during the day, and especially if I have the lights on, I cannot help but stop and take a peek. So my fiction keepers, I'm re evaluating them all the time. And sometimes a book that I sighed and said, I loved this so much for at the end didn't have the staying power, I expect it. So it ends up going away. Sometimes I'm at a used bookstore and I see a book that I read five years ago that made me say, Oh, but I read it from the library. And I say, Okay, it's finally time to put that one on my shelf. Because five years later, I'm still like, remembering it with such fondness. So what's your first step? How do you decide, you know, where a book that you own already goes when you finish?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 35:44**

Right? So when I come to the end of a book, I mean, so not every five star book becomes a keeper book, right? That's just not possible. Space is really the single biggest factor. So because in a perfect world, I would keep every book that I consider to be five stars, I would keep it No, that doesn't mean I would keep it forever. Like you said, some have more staying power than others. But I would at least have the ability to say the, this is all my five star, these are all my five star books. That's not the case right now for me. And so right now, if I finish a book, and I say, and I'll usually say this on the show, and this is something that you can listen for, and it kind of lets you know whether or not it's on my forever shelf. If I say this book now has a part of my heart. It has landed on my keep shelf. And so and so what I do then is not only does it go on my shelf, but Kaytee those are the only books that get the very, very special book embossment that you purchased for me, you You made me a book embosser, which is like a kind of like a punch tool, but it does not punch all the way through the page. Yeah, right. And it says "From the Library of Meredith Schwartz". And it's very beautiful. And it's very textured, and all of that. And it's like this, it's kind of like this ritual that I have where when I kind of know immediately whether or not no, this is a book that I need to have near me. And so I emboss it, and then I put it up on the shelf, and I make room for it. And it's a it's a whole ritual for me for sure. I think what it comes down to is I have to really love a book, it has to feel like it has become part of who I am. And also, I have to feel like there might be a reason for me going forward that I would want to pick it up again. So for that reason, this is interesting. I don't actually have a lot of mysteries or thrillers on my keep shelf. Now obviously, anyone who listens to our show knows that that is the vast majority. In fact, it averages to be about 70% of my reading. And so it might seem strange, that I don't have a lot of mysteries or thrillers that I keep. Louise Penny is really the outlier there. I have all of her books. I have an entire shelf devoted just to the series. I don't keep a lot of mysteries or thrillers because I don't feel the need to go back and revisit them. But other kinds of books, Shell seekers, Count of Monte Cristo, Gentleman in Moscow, of course.

And the latest one I added is Search. I just added that to my forever shelf. Because I just know it's something that I'm going to want to revisit. Usually in the form of just kind of reading a few pages as a little bit of a palate cleanser. Sometimes when I just need a little bit of comfort, or some fresh inspiration. Those are the books that end up on my keep part of my shelf.

**Kaytee Cobb** 38:47

Okay, I have some follow up questions, because you and I both really love a library adventure. A lot of people know that I love an audiobook, of course as my primary method of reading. So how do you decide when you're in the middle of a book you don't own or that you can't physically touch? Like an audiobook, when to buy a copy? Like if you are sitting there thinking, Oh, I wish I could underline does, then do you buy a copy?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 39:12

Right? That could be a part of it. I would say interesting now that I think about it. I don't know that I have ever listened to a forever book and then said I need to buy that. I think the books I listened to are shelved in a different part of my brain. And I almost feel like I keep them better than I do books that I read well I know that I keep them better than and more like I remember the details more. So I think that might be part of it. But I definitely have had books that I have gotten from the library and said in those cases it'll be either I want to buy a copy of this because I would definitely want Johnny to read it, that definitely happens or I will say this this has to go on my forever shelf. I have to have a copy of this One, and so then I will buy it. But it's, you know, again, probably less than one in 25 books or, you know, I'm just pulling that number out of my head, but that it feels like it's a very rare thing for me to put a book on the shelf, because I just don't have a lot of room. The vast majority of books in my house are books that I haven't read yet. And I know that's really different than a lot of readers who the vast majority of the books that they have are books that they have read,

**Kaytee Cobb** 40:26

well, definitely. And that also that plays into my shelving as well, where if I stick something, you know, across the top row of my bookshelves and then decide later if I want to shelve it or not, a lot of times that will mean I look at everything else that's on that shelf, like I have a nonfiction shelf that's about parenting, and I have a memoir one and I have all my fiction together. And I'll say, Okay, well, you're starting to run low on room, is this worth more to you than one of these other books where it has to be almost a one in one out situation? I can't keep them all, even if there's a lot of books that I really love. But I do have one more question because in that one in one out situation, I also have stuff like my very special copies of Scythe that series, right. And when I got that series, I got rid of the other copies that I had of that trilogy, which didn't match and like I was fine letting them go. Have you ever purchased a special edition of something? Or do you have multiple copies of any of the books on your shelf,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 41:26

I have multiple copies of only two books, and that is Count of Monte Cristo, I have five different copies of it, I do let myself collect that like if I really find a very special one. And then I have multiple copies of a book called The Home-Maker, which is one of my top 10 books of all time. It was written in the 1920s. I absolutely love it. And when I see it, I feel like I have to have it. And I don't see it very often. So I think I have three copies of that.

**Kaytee Cobb 41:55**

That's fun. Yeah, I'm more of a, I'll have to decide, you know, like I didn't annotate site at all. I didn't write in the margins or underline it anywhere. But I do have other books where a prettier edition came out later. But that's not the one I read. That's not the one that I wrote in or held close to me or got beach sand in it when I took it to the beach in Mexico, so it doesn't have the same sentimentality to it. And I'll only keep one, which means too bad for that pretty copy. I'm keeping this one instead.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 42:26**

Yep. Well, and to that point in my Louise Penny collection, the first three books I have are the original ones that I read. And the rest of them. I was getting them as they come out every year. And so and then they became more unified after that. But yes, like my my first copy of Still Life is a book that I've read and reread multiple times. Roxanna and I are getting ready next weekend to record our first episode of A Journey to Three Pines. And so yes, I the fact that it's the book that I read. Louise Penny, the first time matters more to me than having a match set.

**Kaytee Cobb 43:05**

Right? That's yeah, that's an interesting thing, because I was talking with some friends today about a very beautiful Special Edition copy of Babel Babel, which was my favorite book of 2022. But even though I loved that book so much, I would not spend the money on the special edition because I wrote in it. And that book shows my actual journey through it as a reader. So it's never going away. Like that one's mine forever, I'm keeping it always. And so things like that are all kinds of, you know, the things that I evaluate as I'm deciding if I want a different copy of a book, or if I want to keep that one at all. Or if I'm ready to let it go, which is like, you know, a large majority of the books that I read and evaluate at the end.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:51**

Right, right, exactly. And sometimes, you know, that is we have to make hard decisions, right. And and what I love is that everyone's library, whether it's one, I mean, I have lived so much of my life in a place where I literally only had a tiny three shelf bookcase. And that was all that I had in my 900 square feet for books. And so those were different decisions that I'm making now. And I would like to think at some point, in the future, I will be making some even different decisions about what I keep and what I you know, don't it evolves. And it's different for every person about what constitutes their perfect library at any moment.

**Kaytee Cobb 44:31**

I think this is such an interesting discussion. And I think it's interesting to think through how other readers make those decisions and if they can choose, you know, willy nilly or if it's just the most recent, we know, for example, that Roxanna has less than 50 books I feel like is what she told us in her home at any given time, which is far and away, unlike her decision making process has to be even tighter than either of the rights that we talked about. So Right.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 44:56**

And I've talked to friends who say my library it's filled with mostly books that I have read, and very few books that are on my TBR. Because those TBR books, they stress me out because I feel like they're sitting there kind of dragging their fingernails waiting, judging me waiting for me to get there. And I think that's a really valid like, I understand that. For me, I feel more like books are with the fact that the majority of my my library is filled with books I haven't read yet, instead of feeling like the books are judging me, I feel like the books are patiently waiting for exactly the right moment. Almost like a wine collector says, you know, I might not actually read every book, I drink every bottle of wine. But the fact that I have it and can is a huge part of the enjoyment. So for me, that's why 95% of the books in my house are TBR books, and they don't stress me out. So just every reader is different. And we you know, we make decisions based on what is exactly right for us. And I love the idea of readers each individually saying, This is my library, whether it's one shelf, or a room or several rooms, and it's exactly the way that I want it to be right now.

**Kaytee Cobb 46:09**

Yes, exactly. Love it.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:11**

All right, good. Okay, Kaytee. Well, let's make some wishes in the fountain What's your wish this week?

**Kaytee Cobb 46:17**

Okay, so this week, I'm going to wish I do wish to recommend a reading experience to our listeners. This past week as part of my reading Mojo recovery program. I finished buddy reading a book with Katie, that I will recommend to literally every reader, which is kind of a big ask for this right for readers in general. The book is called Ex Libris Confessions of a Common Reader by Anne Fadiman. It was published in 1998, and includes 18 essays on the reading life. The first little part of the blurb is delightful. So I'm going to read that here. Anne Fadiman is, by her own admission, the sort of person who learned about sex from her father's copy of Fanny Hill, whose husband buys her 19 pounds of dusty books for her birthday. And who once found herself poring over her roommate's 1974 Toyota Corolla manual, because it was the only written material in the apartment that she had not read at least twice. If you listener, identify yourself even tangentially as a reader, which I assume you do, because you're listening to currently reading podcast, this book is for you. It's only 154 Pages for those 18 essays. So most are 10 pages or less. It's like a small dose of readerly delight to add to your day, read one a day or read one each time you finish another book. But whatever you do, please read with a buddy. There's so much to explore here about the kind of readers you grew up around the horror and hilarity of finding a typo in whatever you're reading. The ways you shelve your books, which ones you keep the excitement of a used bookstore hall. It's like an exploration of the joys of the reading life. I would even go so far as to add that if you can find a used copy, it feels like it would be exactly what Anne Fadiman would want. We got ours used Katie and I and we compare their quirks. Katie's had a coffee cup ring on the front cover. Mine had clearly suffered a bit when the back cover was set on something that stuck to it. It was sun faded, and it has so it has two different colors on the covers and spine. I think it perfectly encapsulates what you find in the pages of this book. I've already purchased a few more copies to give as gifts. I might even do my own editing and just tear out the pages of the one essay I recommend skipping, which has 38 footnotes and 10 pages. No maam... but otherwise the

other 17 I would call this a true delight and recommend it to every single reader. It's Ex Libris: Confessions of a Common Reader by Anne Fadiman.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 48:51

That sounds wonderful. I love that. That sounds so good. I love that you guys got used copies. That does sound perfect. Now all of us are gonna go look you know, and

**Kaytee Cobb** 49:00

they're won't be any anywhere. Right? Right. I'm buying the ones on Pango. So too bad for the rest of you.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 49:06

Oh my goodness. All right, look, look elsewhere people. Okay, my wish at the fountain is a big wish because it is not likely to come true. My wish is that I liked to put together Ikea furniture. Because I ordered four full sized Billy bookcases, I have finally decided to add one wall of my dining room to my library. So it's going to have a complete wall to wall top to bottom. Well I mean it doesn't go to the ceiling, but for Billy bookcases that are six feet tall. In my dining room, it's going to take up the entire wall. And I'm so excited. I'm finally going to create at least partially what Jamie Golden did when she moved into her new house which is what she calls a library that allows food. So that's what we're going to call the dining room from now on. It's going to be the library that'll allow food. So I'm super excited. actually a very good bookish friend Betsie Ikenberry has offered, who knows why, to come over and help me put these bookcases together? I am ridiculously excited because I think it's gonna help me be able to make different choices than what I'm currently making, which is, I think I'll be able to expand my keeper shelves a little bit. So, an entire wall of bookcases. I wish I liked putting together Ikea furniture. That's my wish for this week.

**Kaytee Cobb** 50:29

Did you know that one of the things I consider weirdest about myself as a human is that if there was a job to put together Ikea furniture, I would apply for that job. I love it so much. But there's not an IKEA in New Mexico, which is part of my problem. I love putting together Ikea furniture I'm so glad that Betsie is going to help you because otherwise I would book a flight and I would have to be late to it by next weekend in order to do this for you because I love it so much.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 50:57

Yes. This is one of those things that I am like really like Johnny doesn't like to do it. He and I don't like to do it together. It's something that causes us tension. So I just was like, What am I going to do and can you bet he's like I absolutely love it. So yes, but the idea of having four new bookshelves Yes, bookcases, not shelves bookcases to put books in because I'm really really running out of room. And so I am super excited about it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 51:23

love it. And of course we will all be waiting with bated breath for beautiful photos.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 51:28

Well in the thing is like when I did my library, my library library I did with them with Pottery Barn shelves and they look like they're built in and that's a whole thing and it was really expensive. But these IKEA bookshelves, they're gonna fit in that room and kind of be the entire wall but they're not that expensive at all. Kind of the take home here is I had to identify a wall in my house that was available. And then the outpouring of cost is not actually that high at all. So I found mine in my dining room. Do you have a bathroom that you could put a bookcase in like literally do you have a hallway like yours? Yeah. I walk into a lot of people's houses where I look at hallways and say wow, you could really ...

**Kaytee Cobb** 52:08

its like 18 feet long you can put so much here. Yeah.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 52:12

And these Billy bookcases are only 11 inches deep. So which is part of the reason why they're so great for bookcases so you don't have to have like a ton of room jutting out like everyone look around where can you put a wall of bookcases? You know, it would make you happy.

**Kaytee Cobb** 52:30

Truly, yes. Hard cosign on that. Yes.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 52:33

And these bookcases are not expensive at all. Okay. All right. That is it for this week. As a reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me on Meredith at @Meredith.reads on Instagram

**Kaytee Cobb** 52:44

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

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 52:47

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

**Kaytee Cobb** 52:57

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

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 53:03

And if you want more of this kind of content, become a bookish friend. It's only \$5 a month and it helps to keep the show completely ad free. You can also rate and review us on Apple podcasts and shout us out on social media. All three of those things make a huge difference in our being able to find our perfect audience.

**Kaytee Cobb** 53:22

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



**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 53:27

Alright, until next week, may your coffee be hot

**Kaytee Cobb** 53:30

and your book be unputdownable.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 53:32

Happy reading Kaytee.

**Kaytee Cobb** 53:33

Happy reading Meredith