



Season 5, Episode 41: Summer Reading + Book Hangovers

Mon, May 22, 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 read recently. And as you know, we won't shy away from having strong opinions. So get ready.

Kaytee Cobb 00:24

We are in 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 my happiest reading is done at 40,000 feet.

Kaytee Cobb 00:42

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico. And I love when summer reading guide season arrives. This is episode number 41 of season five. We are so glad you're here. Whoo. Yes.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 00:53

Summer Reading guide season. I love it too. There are so many good ones coming out.

Kaytee Cobb 00:58

Yes. I can't wait to talk about all my favorites.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:01

All right, good. Okay, well, then, let's let you know right up here at the top that we are going to be discussing something that affects every reader, I'm confident in saying we all share the scourge that is the reading hangover. And we're gonna get into it. We're gonna get into why it happens. And what it feels like. So you know, you're not alone. And we're going to let you know what we do to get out of them. Yeah,

Kaytee Cobb 01:28

well, I might need some tips.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 01:30

I know what I said that really, like optimistically, like, yeah, we know. So I'm hoping in the in the interim, 30 minutes before we get there, we're going to figure it out. All right, we think of something. All right, Kaytee, before we get to that, let's talk about our bookish moments of the week. What have you got?

Kaytee Cobb 01:46

Okay, my bookish moment this week has to be that it's summer reading guide time, we've got friends that are already releasing theirs and ones that will release by the time this episode airs. So this morning, I got the one put together by Amy Allen Clark over at MomAdvice. 37 titles on it, already went through it, added a ton to my TBR and then like, nodded happily in agreement about many of the other ones that are on that list. In a few days in real time, we'll get to see the fantastic content by Sara's Bookshelves and her patron only companion Summer Shelves. Always lots of great stuff. Anne Bogel over at Modern Mrs. Darcy is releasing hers on May 18. Which means that by the time this episode airs, we'll have been able to read through it, even though we haven't seen it yet. And by the end of this actual week, we'll have the Paperback Summer Reading Guide with all backlist picks from Sara at @fictionmatters and the summer reading guide from Kellyhook.readsbooks on Instagram, one of our bookish friends. She puts together one of my favorite guides as well. It's a summer reading Bonanza, and I am here for it. I love this time of year.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 02:52

I know I do too. I feel like it really leans into so much of my favorite kind of reading. And of course, one thing I'm going to be really paying attention to because I was so happy to just do the Fabled summer book review where they're talking about a lot of the books that they're excited about. I placed a bunch of pre orders through that. So I am very interested to see what books appear on all the lists how they're different. They each one offer something a little bit different. And like you I'm going to be taking a look at every one of those. So I love this time of year too.

Kaytee Cobb 03:23

Yeah. Meredith, we often get asked, why don't we put together a summer reading guide? Sure. And the answer is I just listed like 14, right, you want to include Fabled once you include all these other great resources like we don't need to beat that same drum, y'all can get this amazing content so many places,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:40

Right. We'd just be chasing tail lights at that point. And we I think one thing we're very good at is knowing how to stay in our lane and do what we do best. And those other people are doing a great job at those summer reading guides. Definitely. Okay, so my bookish moment of the week is that I got to do some of my favorite reading time. So I've talked about this before Kaytee, you know this about me, I love to read on planes. Now when my daughter Devon and son in law Mark and grandson Jeffrey lived in Memphis, I was regularly getting this all day travel time to go back and forth to Memphis. Now, I didn't like that they lived far away. And I do like now that they live here in Austin in our very same neighborhood. But I don't get to fly back and forth anymore, which is definitely you know, if I had to choose, I would choose the current circumstance. But I missed this plane day. So I just came back from Hawaii had a wonderful trip for my 50th birthday, which isn't until August, but we wanted to celebrate in

May because the weather is just so nice. And we had an absolutely fantastic trip. But bonus it is an eight hour direct flight from Austin to Honolulu.

Kaytee Cobb 04:50

I didn't know you could fly direct. That is awesome.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 04:52

Totally direct. It's direct from Austin to Honolulu. And then if you want to go the other way, you get to go from Austin to London direct each eight hours but totally different experiences. So went to Hawaii I had so much reading time, I absolutely love to read on the plane, I've really figured out why. And that is going to have to do with some things I'm going to talk about later in the show. But suffice it to say, a really, really good book and the acoustics in a plane are, there's just a recipe for total bookish success for me. So it'd be talking more about the book that I read in specific, and some of the tools that I use to mimic that reading focus at home when I can't be on a plane all the time. That's going to be later on in the show. But that was my bookish moment that week. I love to read in flight.

Kaytee Cobb 05:42

Yes, we both get some more big flights like that later on this year, which will lead to lots of great reading time

Meredith Monday Schwartz 05:49

Exactly about that. It's the best. It's the best. Okay, Kaytee, let's get into our current reads. What have you been reading lately? I've been so looking forward to talking about books with you.

Kaytee Cobb 05:57

I know. You know, I always get very much like, okay, but it's Meredith and she's just back. What, what's the perfect combination of books to bring to Meredith this week? So I hope you like my combo here.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 06:09

Oh, I'm sure I will.

Kaytee Cobb 06:11

My first one is middle grade. It's Nic Blake and the Remarkables by Angie Thomas. So my theme this week after I picked these three, I realized that I chose three books that are all the newest releases from authors I have loved in the past. Five star authors for me. So this is a fun, I didn't mean to flight it like this but it worked out pretty well. So for Nic Blake, this is the new release from Angie Thomas, who's the author of The Hate U Give as well as others in the garden heights series. She's a beloved author, an autobuy for me in the YA realm, so I was thrilled to find out she was releasing a middle grade novel. This one had some really fun tie ins to bookish nerdiness that I loved. And I was so glad to listen to the audio from libro FM because it was a free ALC in April. Nic Blake, our main character is turning 12 When we meet her. Fun fact she and I share a birthday on May 27. So I was like, Oh Nick, you and I besties immediately. She gets for her birthday, this is not what I'm getting, she gets a pet hell hound puppy for her birthday, and only wants to go see her favorite author at the local bookstore for his book signing. That is something that I would like to do for my birthday as well. But she is a remarkable, as is

her father, a powerful manifester in the unremarkable world, which is our regular everyday world. Most people aren't normals like us on Remarkables. But you know how sometimes you meet someone and they just seem to glow a little like sparkle around the edges. Those people in this novel are remarkable. It's like Nic and her dad. I pictured this like Jamie B Golden, right? She's She kind of sparkles around the edges. Yeah, her and you would be like, there's just something a little special about her. Yeah. When Nic's dad for her birthday, again refuses to teach her the basics of the remarkable craft, even though he's been promising her that he would do so for several years, a disagreement leads to her getting grounded from the bookstore event. But she sneaks out anyway, when dad gets called away. There, she and her unremarkable best friend meet their favorite author, who it turns out is her father's long lost best friend. That revelation leads to many others. And Nic is sent on a hunt for a powerful magical tool that she's never heard of a family she didn't know she had, in order to save the only father she's ever known from certain death, or at least lifelong imprisonment for a crime she's sure that he did not commit. This book has all the best middle grade fantasy lives. We've got an older middle grader who has power she cannot control a world she knows very little about, an unlikely group of young heroes, the strange animals that populate the world, the entire secret society living under our unremarkable noses. All of this adds to the feeling that this is the start of a diverse fantasy series that middle graders are sure to love. It will have though, that many adult reviewers didn't think that Angie Thomas made the jump well enough from ya down to middle grade. I can absolutely see that. As even my review includes that some elements felt pretty derivative of other stories. Like there might be a middle grade fantasy checklist floating around out there that authors have to have quirky best friend - check... strange, otherworldly pet thing - check... unknown talent - check, etcetera, etcetera. If you've got a middle grade fantasy reader in your house who continues to devour books faster than authors can write them. This is the next one to put on their stack and add to their hands. I really enjoyed it. I did give it four stars. Overall, it was a win for me even if it had a little bit of repetitive ness to it. It's Nic Blake and the Remarkables by Angie Thomas.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:44

Oh good. I'm glad I when I saw that on Libro.fm choices I thought I hope Kaytee likes that one because I know how much you like Angie Thomas.

Kaytee Cobb 09:51

Well I let my my other Katie read it first. And then she's like, you know, go ahead and pick it up.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 09:56

She pre read it for you. That's very useful. Excellent. Okay, well, you You said that you accidentally had a theme for your books and Kaytee, I accidentally had a theme for my books. Every once in a while the stars align and I can bring three five star books to the show. And it makes me so happy to be able to do it. So the first one that I want to talk about is Mouth to Mouth by Antoine Wilson. You didn't bring this to the show yet right?

Kaytee Cobb 10:22

Almost put this on mine and said Meredith said she finished it. I'm not putting this on my current reads, but I looked at it when it was like maybe I'm so glad.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:30

Right, exactly. So Kaytee and I have both read it because it was an Indie Press List choice just a couple of months ago, when we were working with Parnassus books in Nashville, Tennessee. They gave us a great stack. And this one was one that I read start to finish in one sitting at my reading retreat. I loved this book. Alright, here's the setup. So our book takes place in a first class lounge at JFK airport. And our narrator has met up with a guy that he went to college with... a guy that he wasn't really great friends with. But as it happens, they meet up in the airport, they decide to have a few drinks while they're waiting for their flight. And the friend that he meets Jeff Cook begins to tell a story, the story at the heart of our book, and he says that many many years ago, his life took a major turn when one day walking on the beach, Jeff Cook rescues a drowning man. So over the course of the book, we learn that Jeff not only rescued the drowning man, who was then taken off by paramedics right at the beginning of our story. But he begins to kind of fixate on this man and sort of feels like their fates are intertwined. And so he feels like he must go and find out at least who he is. And one thing leads to another and all of a sudden Jeff Cook is much more involved in the life of Francis Arsenault, who is an art dealer, the man that he rescued than anyone ever thought possible. The twists and turns that this simple, yet kind of odd premise takes is one of the most interesting books I've read in a really, really long time. What my notes said immediately afterwards that I don't find very many books that make me simultaneously feel super interested in the book, and super smart for reading it. But this book, Mouth to Mouth gave me that feeling. It's definitely got sort of a higher brow, more literary feel to it. It's not the kind of book for example that you're going to see on Instagram everywhere. And I don't do that kind of more literary reading a ton. But I like it when I do especially when the book itself is totally interesting like this one is and not very long, like this one also is. Mouth to Mouth is excellent. The New York Times in their review called it quote, an enthralling literary puzzle, powerful, intoxicating, and shocking, I would definitely say that it is intoxicating. And the construction of this book is fascinating. It was like nothing I had read before. But while there were elements of the story that were familiar, the mystery of exactly what's going on between Jeff and Francis Arsenault of this this art dealer were fascinating and kept me turning the pages. It's so interesting to consider the question, what do you owe someone who has saved your life? And also, I found myself contemplating the notion of if I had gotten extra time, the way that the art dealer did in this story, would I be using it correctly? And what does correctly mean? And what if my definition of a life well lived is different than yours, Kaytee. I should also say that this book is less than 200 pages. So it only takes about two hours of your time to read. And it gave me so much to think about. This is a thinking person's mystery. Speaking of thinking people I should mention that Barack Obama also had this on his list of favorite books for 2022. So there's that

Meredith Monday Schwartz 10:37

Parnassus and Barack, they're just besties

Meredith Monday Schwartz 14:05

this book is definitely a thinker. It's not one that you're going to hug at the end, but you're going to be very glad that you read it. When you read this book, you often hear comparisons made to Patricia Highsmith's Tom Ripley book, I need to find the exact title of that book because clearly I don't...

Kaytee Cobb 14:21

The Talented Mister Ripley.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 14:22

Thank you. And there is definitely an element of that. It's a comparison that I understand but where that book was irritating to me. This book pulled me in and kept me sitting in my seat until I was finished. Finally, I have to say this is overwhelmingly a fantastic book club book. It's not very long, it's totally readable and imminently discussable. Put this on your note in your apple notes somewhere that say, books I could take as a suggestion to book club. This is Mouth to Mouth by Antoine Wilson Thank you Parnassus books. I never would have found this book by myself.

Kaytee Cobb 14:58

I completely agree. I 100% cosign everything you just said. One of the things we talked about it when we brought it to the Indie Press List was the way the author brings you as the reader into the story. And that was one of my favorite parts about this book feeling like I was sitting in the lounge, hearing the story myself, right? I loved it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 15:19

Right. The narrator sits in for the reader. So it's like you, as the reader are sitting across from this guy, and you're trying to put a pin in him like you're trying to figure out. Is he the same person I knew from college. What is the story he's telling me? Clearly, it's, it's absolutely fascinating. It's so so good.

Kaytee Cobb 15:39

It's brilliant. It's what it is. It's really just a smart novel.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 15:43

It's smart, but totally readable. So great pool book, because again, you can read it just over the course of a beach vacation. It's very, very readable that way. But then you'll also feel like when people ask you Oh, what are you reading? You're gonna feel like, Oh, well, I have this little literary gym to recommend to you. You're gonna it's gonna make you feel smart.

Kaytee Cobb 16:04

Yes, definitely. Also bring me more pool nachos, please.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 16:07

Exactly, exactly. Oh, my gosh, the pool matches. Okay. All right, can you what's your next book?

Kaytee Cobb 16:12

Okay, my second one this week is If Only You by Chloe Liese. This is another one from the Bergman brothers series, which I don't always read. But when I do I love every second. That made me feel a little bit like the Dos Equis guy, right? I'm not trying to be the Dos Equis guy. So Chloe Liese writes this large family series that's full of great representation and great steam, and I was excited to read about the next one in the series, which features the Bergman sister so this is the Bergman brothers series. We finally have a Bergman sister. The Bergmans are a large Swedish family in California, mostly and Washington in the US. They are sporty and loud and playful and brutally honest. There are six brothers and a sister in this raucous family. In this novel, we get to follow the only sister in the Bergman family

Ziggy, which is short for Sigrid. She is a star player on the national soccer team. She's the youngest of the Bergman siblings and always stuck sitting at the kids table now with her nieces and nephews because all her siblings have grown up and they're sitting at the grown up table, and she has been coddled by her family due to her autism diagnosis, but she wants to sully her image a little bit, become someone worth noticing, someone that makes it into the papers. So she ropes in her brother Wren's best friend Sebastian. Sebastian is a bad boy hockey player. He comes from a hockey playing dynasty. And his entire goal is to disappoint his perfectionist stepfather who treated him like garbage for his entire childhood. Seb has been in the news for his carnal pleasures, his substance abuse, and even for bar fights. A fake relationship with Ziggy could lead him to shining up his image a little bit as her golden girls status rubs off on him. So they're both kind of trying to meet in the middle he wants to shine up a little, she wants to get a little dirty. The two of them rub each other the wrong way at first, as their personalities clash between angry yoga, which I would for sure like to try and breakfast dates and faking it for the cameras, they start to feel something a bit more than friendship, even though they've drawn a very clear boundary around the entire situation. One of my favorite parts of the Bergman brothers series is the way this family is so connected. They have regular family dinners with all three generations present. That means we get to revisit the characters from previous books in the series constantly as well. Each time a new relationship forms they are pulled into this joyful Swedish family that has a diversity of physical disabilities, mental health conditions and sexuality is represented in what feels very modern family to me. Like it's a sitcom told through romance novels instead of 25 minute episodes. Chloe Liese's dialogue is always sharp and snarky, and often has me laughing out loud, her happy ever afters leave my heart all gooey, gooey and delighted. And her sex scenes come late in the book that they're always Pitch Perfect and perfectly steamy. I adored Ziggy and Seb and the way they both found a bigger and better part of themselves in this novel. And I'm looking forward to the final book in the series, which will release next year. In the meantime, I'm going to run cleanup duty and read the other two books that I missed between this one and the first ones because truly I love all the Bergman's and they're all great and they all have really great reviews. So this one was the sixth but again you can read out of order. If Only You by Chloe Liese.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 19:35

Alright Kaytee, so where do you put it on the Spicy scale.

Kaytee Cobb 19:41

Okay, so, again, the steamy scenes are late in the book. And they are skippable but they are very detailed. So I would put this at least three and a half to four. Definitely not like off the charts. embarrassed to read in front of your family.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 19:56

So one to five, you'd put it at a four.

Kaytee Cobb 19:59

I put it A three and a half to four out of five.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 20:01

Yes. Okay, good. That's good to know. All right, second five star book of my triplet of five stars. And I mentioned this a few episodes ago, this was the book that had my Fitbit thinking that I was doing cardio when all I was doing was sitting and reading. This is *Drowning* by TJ Newman, which comes out by the time the show drops in just a little bit over a week. So again, get your holds and get your preorder sent, you can preorder it from your independent bookstore, you can get it on Audible read it in any way. But this is the ultimate summer vacation book for everyone. This is so so good. Okay, categorical recommendation categorical, just across the board. Now, it's got a super short setup, because you don't need to know very much. And you've probably already heard it 10 times anyway. So to refresh your memory, plane crashes, some people are still inside, but then the plane, which is crashed, falls into the ocean, and we only have a few hours of oxygen left, what's going to happen? That's all you need to know. That's the entirety of this book. Right. Okay. Now, hypothetically, I should not have read this book already, because I said I wasn't going to read it till after my Hawaiian vacation, because this book takes place on a flight from Hawaii back to the mainland. So I did think about it a little bit yesterday, as I was flying back. I'm going to admit to that, but I'm going to tell you later why I'm glad that I read it before I went on my trip. Okay, so the bookish heart wants, what the bookish heart wants. And when you add that to the fact that several trusted sources including of course, our beloved Elizabeth Barnhill have said that it's a wild ride that's worth every moment, I could not stop myself from jumping in when it landed in my Kindle. This book was, of course by TJ Newman, who you all will remember wrote *Falling* from two summers ago, which was also very propulsive and heart pounding. I liked *Drowning* even better. It's just a step above, on a couple of levels. This was page turning as was *Falling*, but it was also substantial in a way that I didn't experience with *Falling*. The writing was smoother the stories and the characters went deeper, especially that of our lead family Will, Chris and their daughter Shannon. This was a wild ride of a book, no question, but I never felt panicky. Now that's a tough needle to thread because I am claustrophobic and totally afraid of dying in the water. But somehow TJ Newman knew when to ratchet up the tension and when to break it with a moment of levity. Also, the blurb on the cover of the ARC says that it's like *Apollo 13* on crack. But I kept thinking that a better comp for this was actually *Project Hail Mary*, it kind of reminded me of that in its pacing, each book took you into the science of what was happening, but had you caring so much more for the fate of the people involved. That's why I would make that comparison. Finally, again, I told you, I would tell you this, I'll say that reading this did not make me afraid to fly as with falling. If anything, it instilled more confidence in me in the planes themselves. And especially in the crews that fly them it once again underscored how amazing flight attendants are, and pilots of planes and how much we need to respect and revere them when we're flying. I loved the heart pounding experience of reading this book. And it is absolutely as I said, going to be the book of the summer, everyone is going to want to get their hands on this. This is *Drowning* by TJ Newman.

Kaytee Cobb 23:39

I'm so glad that you brought it to the show. I have not yet picked it up. But I am going to I just have to figure out when and we just got May ALCS for libro FM, and they did include this one. Yes. I may be doing it or not. Yeah,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 23:52

well, it is good that you're proceeding with care because this is one of those books that you want to be careful when you start it because you either want to plan it when you can just swallow it whole or you want to know you're going to be irritated with whatever real life has doing until you can get back to it. So that's something that you should plan carefully.

Kaytee Cobb 24:12

Definitely. I've got a solo drive to Arizona coming up here soon. So it might be perfect time to knock out a whole audio book in one in one swoop. Excellent. Okay. I also have a thrilling novel for my final pick. This week. I'm going to talk about The Marriage Act by John Marris.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 24:30

Oh, good, good, good.

Kaytee Cobb 24:32

So I am a well established fan of John Marris, especially his near future Sci Fi series that starts with The One. I've read everything he released in that world so far, and will absolutely continue to do so even though some have been bigger hits than others. With his newest release The Marriage Act, I am nearly as obsessed with this one as I am with the one the book that started it all for me. I have a theory about why this is but first let me set this one up for us. In this Near Future world, same one we've been in for the rest of these novels, Britain has determined that married couples are happier, healthier and live longer than unmarried couples. The government wants to encourage healthy marriages. So they introduce a device called the oddity... oddity. I read it. I'm not sure how it's pronounced the auditee into the homes, and as wearable devices of couples who sign up for smart marriages. This device listens at random times throughout the day to figure out if a marriage is in trouble or not. If it sets off red flags through AI analysis, it is elevated to level one, level two and level three, and may end up resulting in divorce. If a relationship responder doesn't think the marriage can be salvaged. Now, why would anyone sign up for big brother watching their private marital lives? Well, smart marriages come with a whole host of other benefits, better housing options, lower interest rates and down payments, better schools priority access in the NHS, the UK health system, all of which make those with smart marriages relatively privileged compared to those who opt out. Of course, once you invite technology into a private matter, like a marriage, things get complicated. And in this novel, we're following four main couples through this technological interference, each with very different results. We've got Roxy, an influencer who's trying to make it big and her husband, an anti Marriage Act protester in her failing relationship. That's couple number two, a gay couple and an elderly couple. While it took me a little time to get my character straight, because in each storyline, there are of course, at least two people, I took a few notes on each character, and then was off to the races. In signature John Marris style, he alternates each chapter between different points of view. So you're constantly flipping from one storyline to the next and start to make connections between them. This really works well for me as a reader, especially if I'm feeling slumpy or book hangover-y. That's a small bite thing that allows me to maintain a short attention span if I need it. I love this book. And it went right on to my five star John Marris shelf alongside The One. The key here for the ones I really love The One and The Marriage Act is not just that there's a government or company tech thingy to make this feel far off, but still possible in the future, but that there's an element of danger. And one of the characters, there's tension building, and you're pretty sure

someone is going to die, not just because someone pushes a button in a remote bunker, but because there will be actual murder and blood. That personal murderous connection is what brings his novels from good to great for me. And this one happened. I was flipping the pages until my wrist cramped because this one is not at all small at 432 pages. But I devoured it in just two settings. It's *The Marriage Act* by John Marrs.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 27:55

Oh, I'm so glad that you liked that because I know there had been some concern about how quickly his books were coming out.

Kaytee Cobb 28:00

Yeah, because he has two types of books that he writes. He writes kind of more traditional psychological thrillers and then these sciency sci fi adjacent ones. And he's doing one of each per year at this point. Wow. Which is a lot like settle down, John. Yeah, but these ones continue to just oh, they just swell. They're awesome.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:19

The sciency ones work for you. Okay. Yeah, definitely. Good. And another one that I've been really keeping my fingers crossed about for you. Good. Okay. All right, Kaytee...

Kaytee Cobb 28:29

Five Star number three.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:31

More importantly, I don't know for sure, but it is a definite contender for my favorite book of the year. I'm excited. Like I could be wrong. I don't know what the next half of the year brings as far as reading goes. But I cannot stop talking about obsessing about and I have a massive hangover from reading *The Fourth Wing* by Rebecca Yarros.

Kaytee Cobb 28:55

Okay.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 28:56

Oh my gosh. All right. Here's setup. Our lead character is 20 year old Violet Sorrengail, and she her whole life has supposed to be come a scribe. She was supposed to live a quiet life among books and history. But all of a sudden, the commanding general of the Basgiath War College, who is also her mother has ordered Violet to join the hundreds of candidates to try to become the elite of their country. *Dragon Riders*. Now, Violet, Violet's sister, everyone... no one can understand this decision. Because becoming a dragon rider is extraordinarily difficult and dangerous. Violet is smaller than everyone else and her body is weak and brittle because of an illness that she had as a baby. So that's dicey on a good day. But the thing is that dragons won't bond with a rider who is a fragile human. They and if they don't bond with them, they incinerate them. So again, trying to become a dragon writer is incredibly dangerous. And this year at the war college there are fewer dragons who are willing to bond with cadets than there are cadets to bond with them. So things are cutthroat from the start. And add to that

that of course many of the cadets hate Violet on site because she's her mother's daughter. And one of those is a her wing leader, the ruthless and powerful Xaden Riorson. Add to all of that, that outside the college war with their brutal neighbors grows more deadly. The kingdom's protective wards are falling and innocent people are dying every day. And then Violet begins to suspect that leadership is hiding a terrible secret. So yeah, the tagline on this book is right. Everyone at the Basgiath War College has an agenda. Because once you enter, there are only two ways out: graduate or die. Y'all. This book is every thing. This book, it's my perfect reading experience. I could not love it any more if I tried. Now, it's worth noting that it came to my attention because Jess Rumley one of our bookish friends posted about it. She hadn't read it yet, but she was like, I'm seeing this book everywhere. What do you think? I of course, seeing that it was just posting that went to go look and immediately downloaded it and bought a copy of it because it's gold with black sprayed edges. The hardcopy and the sprayed edges have dragon white dragons on black. It's incredible. It's a gorgeous print book. It has maps in it, it's just all the good stuff. Jess was the person who recommended A Curse So Dark and Lonely to me. So when I see one of her bookish potential five stars, I immediately know I have to check it out too. As I said, this book is perfect. I'm going to tell you why. It's super propulsive, you are in this story from the first moment, the plot grabs you by the throat and does not let you go all the way through. It's got just the right amount of action. Not too much, but plenty of high stakes scenes that had my heart racing. But it never lapses into the kind of action that goes on so long and becomes so violent that it bores me, this book is perfectly paced. As I said, there are high action points, but also breathers there are moments of romance. And then we leave that aside because we've got work to do. Rebecca Yarros just nails the pacing all the way through. It's also perfect because it's got world building and magic, but you never have to struggle to get into either one of those things. It's got political machinations and strategy. But you never have to struggle to understand or care about what's happening. It's got romance, but it's believable. And it builds just right. And it is delicious. There are two major sex scenes, but they can be skipped with no problem. And more than anything, those sex scenes are earned. By the time they happen, you want them to happen as much as the characters do. I'm going to give it a four on the spicy scale, which our spicy scale is only one to five. I'm going to give it a four because it's you know, but you can also skip those scenes very, very easily if you want to. It's not going to bother you. In short, as I said, it's my perfect reading experience adventure, romance, propulsion, friendship, and the most spectacular dragons I have ever read. Y'all. These dragons are truly frightening and brutal, and excellent creatures. I want to bond with one so badly. It's going to be a series but the first book which I just finished yesterday on the plane is complete enough to be totally satisfying, while also delivering a last scene that has you feeling that November 2023 is way too far away when the next book comes out from a pure vibe perspective. I think the best comp for this is a combination of The Hunger Games and ACOTAR. If you liked both of those, you are going to love this. This book is so good. It's The Fourth Wing by Rebecca Yarros.

Kaytee Cobb 34:11

Okay, November 2023. isn't that far away, Meredith.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:14

It feels to me if it was coming out a week from Thursday, it would feel too long, honestly. I mean, okay, but wait, Kaytee, I need for you to read this book.

Kaytee Cobb 34:25

I am feeling very obstinate about this book. Okay, because everybody is reading it.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:31

Okay. Let me I know, that's totally fine. I completely understand. I just would say give it two chapters, two short chapters. And if you're still feeling obstinate about it, then 100% set it aside and read it a couple years from now and you'll really like it that but it's so so good. Kaytee, it's so good.

Kaytee Cobb 34:50

Okay, well, okay. Is it YA?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 34:53

So, I mean, tell the lead character is 20 and, you know, kind of like new adults like new Adult it but it's just like we're not. There's no angst. I mean, there's no like teenagery stuff. So it didn't it never felt YA to me in the same way that A Curse So Dark and Lonely doesn't feel YA to me. Right, you know, or if you know Furyborn or City of Brass or any of those kinds of you know, it just is we're talking. We're new adult fantasy here because of course, we're talking about dragons and magic. But the fact that they were I kept forgetting how old they actually were. There's a lot of other things that we're concentrating on. It's so good.

Kaytee Cobb 35:40

And it is really beautiful. Like, even before it started to blow up, I saw it on a Instagram reel about books with dragons. And I was like, what is that? I need that yet. Because the sprayed edges and the foil and it's just really pretty

Meredith Monday Schwartz 35:54

well, and I have to say before I picked it up, I was sort of like, because of all that I was sort of like when it came kind of out of nowhere. And I was like, but again, the Jess Rumley connection is just magic for me. But I'm telling you, because I know how much you love. Especially the first book in The Hunger Games series. Yeah, and ACOTAR books two through four, because that's really more where we are here. Yeah. It's really good. Just give it just give it two chapters. And then if it does not work for you, I will never bring it up again. I will never pressure you.

Kaytee Cobb 36:29

Okay, well, I probably also have to wait anyway, because I heard that the first printing sold out but like people are like trying to find copies of it now. Well, no, you come in as a secret out,

Meredith Monday Schwartz 36:38

get it on your Kindle.

Kaytee Cobb 36:40

I don't read on my Kindle Meredith.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 36:43

Okay, well, I've done all I can.

Kaytee Cobb 36:45

My work here is done, perfect.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 36:48

Okay. All right. So that's a lot of big summer reading. That's a lot of five stars. Take it to the pool, read it on the plane. Listen to it in the car. I feel like we've given them a lot of good ideas for their beginning of summer

Kaytee Cobb 37:04

We don't have a reading guide. But this was pretty close.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:06

If we did it would be something like this show. exactly true. A true Exactly. Okay. Well, okay, once you read books that are five stars, the horrible thing that can happen and it is happening to me right now as we speak, is you can get a book hangover. So obviously, a book hangover. Everyone experiences this. But just because we want to be completest a booking over is that feeling you get after you read a book that you love that makes you feel like no other book is ever going to live up to it. It might make you feel like my reading is now broken. After The Fourth Wing. I feel that feeling of like, but wait, how do I not get to wake up and read more about what Xaden and Violet are doing? Yeah, yeah. Let alone like all that. I can't wait to see what's gonna happen just like you don't want to leave the world. And that's a great part of reading. But then there's the crash afterwards. So Kaytee, what book gave you your most of Fourth Wing gave me my most recent book hangover. What book gave you your most recent book hangover?

Kaytee Cobb 38:09

Mine was Babel at the end of 2022. Yeah, I've definitely been slumpy after that, but slumpiness and book hangovers are not the same thing. Babel, I was like, Well, I'm gonna have to quit the podcast because this was perfect. And I'm never reading again. Yeah. Like, I just didn't think it was ever gonna come back after that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:27

Yep. And that two, before the Fourth Wing the last time I felt that was Ten Thousand Doors of January, which I think I said to you, like in a text like, I'm sorry, Kaytee, I'm leaving the show. Because I'm I no longer read books,

Kaytee Cobb 38:39

because nothing will ever be this. Yeah. Or I can't bear to not be in this world anymore.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:46

Yeah. Right. So you just have to read it on repeat. Exactly.

Kaytee Cobb 38:49

Yeah. And the who wants to hear me talk about that book three times a week for the next five years. What's interesting about that?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 38:57

Oh, my goodness, exactly. Right. So in your mind, the difference between a book hangover and a book slump is what?

Kaytee Cobb 39:04

Well, for me, a book hangover, unlike a regular hangover, is largely positive. It is an experience that I love, even though it leaves me feeling like I'm never gonna read again. Whereas a slump is like malaise. It's like, I just, I just want to flop around on the floor and whine like a toddler, as opposed to, I just had the most amazing, perfect experience, nothing will ever live up to it again. So it's like a high point versus a low point. However, a regular hangover, at least you can take Advil, and I don't feel like that really works for a book hangover.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 39:40

No, it's woefully ineffective for a book hangover. Okay. So it is I mean, this is something that every reader struggles with, and it's not something that I think anyone has the one perfect solution, because one way to deal with it is what a lot of people would say, which is don't deal with it, lean into it, lean into it and lean into the fact that you just read a really good book and don't feel like you have to jump into anything. Now things are a little bit different for for people, like you and I who, for what we're doing, we need to keep reading. We don't We can't just be like, Oh, I'm just gonna take up, you know, I'm take off for a month. Yeah, not gonna do that. But normal day to day reading is, in that case, you could just lean into it and just say, You know what, I'm just gonna watch some Netflix for a while and bask in the feeling before I move on to another book. That's a way to deal with it.

Kaytee Cobb 40:31

Do you feel like that's like, take away the podcast part of it? Do you feel like you Meredith Schwartz as a One, Do you think you could do that?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 40:39

Well, so for me, I have two choices, I have to lean into it, which I am known to do. And sometimes that just is what's gonna happen. And I think that's kind of where I am right now. Like, there are books that are so huge for me. And it really only happens maybe once a year that is so huge, that I just have to say, You know what, I'm just going to take a little bit of a reading pause. And if I have to pull some reads that were more meh out of my back pocket for the show, then I'm going to do that because I just need to let my heart kind of settle a little bit. The other option for me is I have to very quickly I have to like immediately pick up another book and just say okay, I'm just reading this right now. Either a palate cleanser or a one night stand book, which usually for me, a one night stand book is a thriller that I know is going to be very, very popcorn-y, not a lot of substance, but it's going to keep me interested also probably a book that is very different from the book that I just have the book hangover from and so I'll pick just like a really, really really, you know, Riley Sager kind of popcorn book that is in sometimes it's just absolutely perfect. It's one nightstand, I don't need it to be a five star book. I just need it to get me

past my book hangover. So that's what I do. I either lean into it or go into something really light and low stakes for a quick palate cleanser and then on to more books.

Kaytee Cobb 42:08

I feel like with both hangovers and slumps, I fight tooth and nail. Like, I am not good at the like, Kaytee just let your let your body and your soul do its thing and rejuvenate. I'm like, No, I will vanquish this hangover, like a dragon. Right? I will do it. Right. So I I also wrote down one night stand books or thrillers, graphic novels are also a win for me, because I can usually do that in a very short period of time. And it's the physical action of flipping pages and moving my brain story from one space to another that gets me started again. But I Gosh, even with a slump when I am telling myself like Kaytee, it's because you're grieving, or it's because you have too much on your plate right now or because blah, blah, blah, you should just let this be what it is. I'm like, No, I refuse.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:05

Well, and then, of course, with both those things, that makes it like quicksand, which if you're a child of the early 80s, as I am, we thought was going to be a real danger in our everyday lives. And we came to learn that with quicksand, the more you struggle against it, the farther down you go. And so I think with book hangovers, there's no question that that is the case, If you if you really struggle against it, you're probably either going to get stuck behind. And if you force yourself, you can get stuck behind a book that you don't love. Or you'll just DNF a bunch of books. And what I should say is what you should be doing is NRNING a bunch of books, because one of the biggest things you have to be aware of when you have a book hangover, is you have to be aware that whatever book you're going to pick up next, it's going to be three stars, it's going to be three stars. Most it can be as three stars. Exactly. So you don't want to pick up a book that you have really good reason to think might work for you. You want to pick up a book that you're like, I'm almost positive, I'm gonna hate this. That's your only real hope. Because if you pick up a book, you're like, Oh, I've wandered forever to read A Gentleman in Moscow. Nope, it's not going to work. You're going to take this amazing book, and you're going to read it at the wrong time when your heart is not ready to love yet. Like right now. It's like when you've been broken up with by someone that you were really in love with. Right? And your heart is tender. I hate that word. But it's the best word here. And you're just feeling very raw and vulnerable. And anything that happens next is not going to work, which is why you need either a one night stand. You need nothing for a while, or you need to date a guy that you're absolutely positive or girl or whoever that you're positive is not going to work for you. low stakes, do not immediately line up something that you're like, Oh, well, I always thought that this book would work for me. It will not work for you.

Kaytee Cobb 44:53

No, not not then for sure. No, I completely agree with that. Sometimes it can be hard though. I mean, I feel like one of The best way is to choose that potential three star book is the one that's been on your TBR for a really long time that you just haven't read, because you don't think you're gonna like it that much. Yeah. Right. Like, that's, that's where that book lives for me. I'm like, What's the book that's been on my shelf for so long? And I've just been like me, don't feel like it may not right now. No, don't care. That's probably the best one to pick up after your book hangover. Because it doesn't matter. All you did was take a book off your TBR that you didn't want to look at anymore anyway. Right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 45:30

Right, exactly. low stakes, whatever it is that it needs to be low stakes. Oftentimes, I pretty much always will go for a thriller that is just a low stakes thriller. But nonfiction can work for me too. If I'm coming out of a big fiction, especially a big fantasy kind of world that I'm struggling with leaving, I don't want to go into another created worlds. And so nonfiction will kind of give me that difference that is palatable, I'm thinking I might jump into *The Wager* by David Grann, his new David Grann's new book, because I feel like that's different enough in subject matter, and it's nonfiction. And it might, you know, if it doesn't work, I can just read the first couple chapters and be like, that was fine as a little palate cleanser, and then just put it back on my shelf for not right now and proceed. But they'll usually be enough to clear my chakras.

Kaytee Cobb 46:19

While we've also talked about the idea of reading one David Sedaris story or one essay from an essay collection, or something where it's just a dip in and out, I would call that in the reading hangover world, I would call that the hair of the dog, where you're like, listen, I just want a little sip of reading. And that's just enough to like, zhuzh me back up, right? And get me on my merry way. Right? So that's kind of like if you dip into an essay collection or a short story collection or something where you're reading 20 pages, right? And that has a complete arc to it. That might be just the little Advil cure that you need, right?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 46:55

Exactly that you write and it doesn't need to be something completely brand new. It's something that maybe you're you're saving for just this kind of reading experience, just a couple of chapters of it. So the biggest information I think that we can impart to you is that if you have a book hangover, the best thing you can do is see it like Kaytee said as the positive thing that it is you just read a book that you absolutely loved. And that is the height of the readerly experience. So that's all we can do is just be really happy because guess what you will read again, and you will have more books that give you book hangovers.

Kaytee Cobb 47:29

Oh yeah, it's gonna happen. You're gonna overdo it on another book someday, friends? Yep.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:35

Absolutely. Okay. All right. Kaytee, do you have a wish for the fountain?

Kaytee Cobb 47:38

I do now. Meredith.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 47:39

Okay, good. I'm glad. Comin in clutch

Kaytee Cobb 47:42

I came without a wish. But I have one now. So my wish this week, we're going to call it it's kind of like a triple press. Basically, I bought three books for current reads that were all from authors I have loved in

the past. So if you heard any of those authors, and you're like, I've never read from that person before, go back to the first one. If you like YA, you can go back to Angie Thomas, *The Hate U Give*, fantastic start to a series. That book is phenomenal. If you like steamy romance, you can start with *Only When It's Us* by Chloe Liese. Again, I brought the sixth in that series today. So there is a ton more Bergman brothers where that starts. And if you like near future sci fi, I'm going to start you with *The One* by John Mars, which I did press previously on the show. But gosh, if you haven't read it yet, what are you doing with your life? It's so good. And if you said, Oh, well, I watched the Netflix series. That's the same thing. NO. That is not the Netflix series is nothing like the book, the book is phenomenal. Go back and read that any of those three would be a great option. Even if you're like, Oh, I had a book hangover recently, maybe this is the Advil that you need the hate you give only when it's us or the one. Any of those three bucks is what I'm pressing into your hands today.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:57

I love it. And you seriously came up with that in 30 seconds, which is just proving that you are the professional that you are good job, Kaytee.

Kaytee Cobb 49:05

What's your wish Meredith?

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:06

All right, my wish, as I talked about when I was talking about reading on the plane in my bookish moment of the week, my wish is that everyone I guess a big overarching wish would be that every reader in the category of reader know thyself, which we talked about all the time. One of the things that you need to know about yourself is What is your perfect reading environment? I have discovered that for me, it's airplane reading. So because I am not rich and famous, I do not get to be on planes all the time. How do I do that at home? Kaytee, I have found I'm not the first one. I'm just this is just really worked for me. I have found that on YouTube. You can go to videos that are either pink noise or brown noise.

Kaytee Cobb 49:50

Brown is my favorite.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:52

Try pink though, because these are just sounds that are created. It's different than white noise. Okay. White Noise can help you drown out other sounds can be especially good for sleeping, right pink noise and brown noise both are made to help you focus by calming. Just the way that the sound waves work on your brain is they calm the thoughts in your head. And they allow you to focus on just one thing, instead of having 100 things in your brain. They are a mix of white noise, and bass. That's what a plane is. A plane is not just white noise, a plane also has those bass tones. So from the engines, exactly. So it's like a drone, with white with like a shhh. So you're getting both of those at the same time. Trust me when I say that, if you put that in your noise cancelling headphones, when you're reading, I do it a lot, I have to write a lot from for my both of my jobs. And when I really feel like I want to bang out something great, I will always put in brown noise. Pink Noise is just a little smoother version of brown noise. I'm almost only doing pink noise at this point, because I have experimented and that's what works for my

brain. But I wish that everyone would experiment with there's tons of different ones of these on YouTube of both kinds. Experiment with them, what I would say is I, in 10 seconds or less know what feels good in my brain. So it's not like you have to do it for a half hour. Like you'll kind of know when your brains like Ooh, I like that. It's really amazing. It's a great tool. Because when I was on the plane, I was reading the last 40% of the Fourth Wing. And I literally I had I was on the plane and I had you know, they give you this Bose headphones, I had those headphones on to over my ears and the plane noise. So there was nothing going into my headphones, they were just kind of over my ears. That combination I was reading and three hours just went and I literally was like what just happened, I felt like I had been zipped in and out of another universe. So finding that like a way to get into that brain space. Lets you sink into books of all kinds. And it's just a really refreshing way to do a reading experience. So that's my wish for everybody. Play with it a little bit. All right.

Kaytee Cobb 52:16

I like that.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:17

I do too. I wish it wasn't pink and brown. But there we go. I didn't I didn't name it.

Kaytee Cobb 52:21

Where's the blue noise? Where's the purple noise? I want those.

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:24

I feel like there were better options. But again, I didn't name it. All I'm doing is experimenting with things in the hopes that they help everyone have a better reading experience. Okay, Kaytee. That is it for this week. As a reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me I'm Meredith at @Meredith.reads on Instagram.

Kaytee Cobb 52:41

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 52:45

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

Kaytee Cobb 52:55

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

Meredith Monday Schwartz 53:01

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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