



# Season 5, Episode 16: Mind-Blowing Books + Finding Your Nonfiction Fit

Mon, Nov 14, 2022 • 53:44

**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 chit chat, heavy on a 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** 00:34

I'm Meredith Monday Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas, and I'm finding my reading momentum again, and it feels so good.

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:43

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in New Mexico and waking up to a snow day makes for a perfect reading experience. This is episode number 16 of season five, and we're so glad you're here.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:55

Oh, Kaytee a snow day. Sounds so nice.

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:00

Yes, it's so exciting. We love our first snow day of the year.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 01:04

That is really, really fun. Okay, all right, we're gonna let you guys know that we are going to be doing a deep dive later on in this episode, because it is November, we're going to do a deep dive into how can you find your nonfiction fit, right? It's Nonfiction November, you might want to take part, but you might not have found that sweet spot for yourself. So we're gonna see if we can poke around a little bit and help you. But before we do that, let's get started that way we always do with our bookish moments of the week. Kaytee, what have you got this week?

**Kaytee Cobb 01:35**

Okay, Meredith like I mentioned in my bite size intro, it is our first actual snow day of the season here in Santa Fe which timestamp it's only November 4. So we only get about six or seven months here where we have no possibility of snow and we are now firmly back into that season. We had a dusting a week or two ago, but nothing stuck. So today, we woke up to about three inches like piled on the cars piled on the fence posts. And we haven't even fallen back yet on the clocks. But a snowy day here means tired kids from playing in the snow. It means hot chocolate and warm socks. It means snuggling on the couch under brand new blankets with a stack of books next to me. So I can dive straight from one into the next like, okay, finished with that one. Let's go straight on to book number two. It means we're eating what we have in house because I don't want to drive anywhere at all, and lighting candles that are smelling good and giving us that warm, snowy glow inside the house as well. It's just a fantastic reading experience. And by the end of winter, I'm usually really over it. I'm like, "You know what? I'm done with snow. I don't want to shovel anything. I'm over it." But the very first one of the season just gets me so excited about that entire sequence of events that playing outside, reading under the blankies. All of it. I'm just thrilled. But today is the first one.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 02:55**

That sounds absolutely perfect. When we get snow here in Texas, it means bad things are happening. So I would, I love the idea of snow being a positive thing. And not everyone worrying that like the entire grid is gonna go down and all of that. So I'm so glad that you guys get that. And again, I've said it before New Mexico, it's so unexpectedly beautiful and snowy and mountainous in ways that I as a California girl never understood. And so I'm so glad that knowing you has opened up my eyes to that very beautiful part of the country.

**Kaytee Cobb 03:29**

Yeah, we're not just a nothing in the middle of the country. We've got some fun stuff here. It's pretty exciting.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 03:35**

It's really a beautiful state. Okay. All right. Well, my bookish moment of the week is that yes, I found my reading momentum again, which as I said last, the episode that I recorded, I knew that I would that was never really in question. But it was kind of like when, how long was that going to take and what was going to get me out of it. And so I was so grateful, I wanted to just say thank you to all the people who DM'd us and who DM'd me really just expressing that they have been there in the same place. And it always feels good to not feel alone. And also, I wanted to say that there were two things that in this this particular time helped me and I think that it's different with every reading slump or with every period of time when your readings broken, but this time one of the things I did is that I just told myself, you know what I'm putting reading on the calendar I literally you guys know I live and die by my calendar. But my reading is not something that normally has a place on my calendar, right? It's kind of something I just do. Well in this case I said no. And I slotted in as if it was a meeting like 7:00 to 7:30am, 7:00 to 7:30pm, 9:30pm to 10pm. Like I literally slotted it in which means my my alarm goes off saying in five minutes you need to read and so I kind of did it even when I didn't feel like it. You know sometimes there's other activities that you might do with your significant other where you like, "I kind of don't feel like reading right now..."

**Kaytee Cobb** 05:01

When you get started, you're not really interested in it,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 05:04

but then it kind of becomes interesting. It kind of felt like that to me. And so what I found is that as I was doing that reading that was, quote, unquote, "forced", I started getting into it really easily. And I was reading some books that I really liked. The other thing that worked - short books. We did an episode a few episodes back with some really good suggestions, but a couple of really short books, and I'm talking about novella, short 120 pages. I needed a quick win. I needed, I needed my book journal emails to be going back into my folder where I keep these things. And so I read a couple of short books that were really great for me. So in this particular instance, that's what helped me.

**Kaytee Cobb** 05:05

I love that. First of all, I can hear the resounding applause that is happening with all our listeners being so excited that you found your groove again, but just it feels so good to get back to something that you were missing. So I'm thrilled for you.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 06:01

Yes, it does. It just feels more normal. Everything's feels more normal. Alright, Kaytee. Let's talk about our current reads. What's your first book you want to talk about this week?

**Kaytee Cobb** 06:13

Okay, my first one this week is called A Place Called Home by David Ambroz. This is a memoir. It came onto my radar courtesy of bookish friend Aubrey Cheadle, who tagged me like very gently and was like, "Just maybe if you're interested, someday, you might want to pick this one up", which was the perfect way to get me to read a book.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 06:13

She knows what to do.

**Kaytee Cobb** 06:34

Yes, and she knew it would be right up my alley, and she was right. In this memoir, David is recounting his childhood experiences with homelessness and a mom with mental illness. This is a swing up book, and I want to say that right at the top because it is tough in the beginning, and the middle. David now is a lawyer and a child welfare advocate and his experiences with homelessness and in the foster system are what made him such an exceptional person for that role. When we start this book, David is homeless with his family in New York City for 11 years of his life, the first 11 years off and on. Each time they find a place to lay their heads, they're unable to retain that housing for a variety of reasons, but mostly because of his mom's bad days, which lead to her missing work, and physically and emotionally abusing her children. When David and his siblings should be in elementary school, they're instead walking the streets seeking shelter while their mom is battling mental illness. They rest in train stations, 24 hour diners, anywhere that's warm and dry. They bathe in public restrooms, and steal food from convenience stores to quell their hunger. Eventually, David is placed in foster care, but not until he has

had to fight his way through a system that seems geared against him as the child. At first, his foster care home feels like salvation. It feels like a safe place. But soon it proves to be just as unsafe. He's moved from home to home, and in all but one placement he is abused. His burgeoning homosexuality makes him an easy target for others' cruelty. Like I'm painting a bleak picture, right? But like I said, this book ends with a swing up, we get to a good place. David finds hope and opportunities in libraries, schools and the occasional kind hearted adult. He harnesses an inner grit to escape the all too familiar outcome for a kid like him. Through hard work and resolve, he's able to get a scholarship to Vassar College, his first significant step out of poverty. He later graduates from UCLA law with a vision of using his degree to change the laws that affect children and poverty. Even as a young adult, David ends up in rooms full of people with quite a bit of power, like senators and presidents. He uses his experiences and trauma to speak to power. And he speaks to the ways that the system works, and the many ways that it fails. I can't think of a single person who would be able to read this book and not feel moved to some kind of action, whether that's researching child welfare in your area, looking into fostering yourself or having a conversation with others around children in the foster care system. There are more than 400,000 kids in the foster care system currently in the US alone and it needs vast improvement because of experiences like David's where he's abused sexually and physically in various placements. I listened to this one on audio, because I love a memoir read by the author. And please No, please, please listen here that I am not a sensitive reader. But there are portions of this book that I would have skimmed if I were reading it on paper. David deals with a medical situation that I can't unhear or unsee. And I had to set this book aside for multiple days before I could come back to it because it was so raw and impactful. That section specifically after that I was able to move forward with it. And then I was fine and I ended up really, really loving it. But oh my gosh, that little chunk of the book was was too hard, basically, for me to be able to listen to. So know that going in, especially if you have any kind of sensitivities around medical situations. This book was phenomenal and I cannot recommend it highly enough for your Nonfiction November, if this one is a fit for you. It's A Place Called Home by David Ambroz.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 10:22

Man, that might be a book that I'm not... that I couldn't even pick up. Right, though, that is all of those things are so difficult and yet so important for us to be aware of, and to make changes to that. And that's what nonfiction is supposed to do for us, but that would be tough.

**Kaytee Cobb** 10:40

It's it was so hard. But I mean, it was so good. But oof. Okay, shake it off.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 10:47

Yep, well, I'm gonna help us shake it off. Although again, it's really important that we read like that. And it's important that I challenge myself to read like that. But I'm going to help us shake off that feeling for now, because I'm going to talk about a book that's a lot lighter. And this book, and again, this is one of those things where I feel sometimes our segments and then we'll take a left turn this one just feels like and now Meredith is going to be super tone deaf by talking about that, you know, I don't know. Because this, these two books don't go together. Okay, so let's take a beat. And we're going to talk about this light cozy book. All right. This is Death and Croissants by Ian Moore.

**Kaytee Cobb** 11:23

I love croissants.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 11:24

I know. And this is a great book. All right, our lead character, the handsome Richard is a middle aged Englishman, and he finds himself running a b&b in the Vall de Follette in the laoire Valley in France. Nothing ever happens to Richard and that is the way he likes it. The more boring the better is his motto, this dude loves a routine. One day, however, one of his older guests disappears, leaving behind only a bloody handprint on the wallpaper of his room. Another guest, the very beautiful and mysterious Valerie persuades the reluctant, Richard, to investigate the disappearance of this guest. Again, very reluctant, Richard just feels like something happening. He's not a fan. Then things become really serious. And someone murders Ava Gardner, one of Richard's beloved hens. The disappearance of a guest is one thing, but you do not mess with Richards hens. All right. Obviously, we're in we're in light frothy territory here. But I was asking myself, "What do you read when you read all of The Thursday Murder Club series?" Because I had just finished the third one. But you're still craving something with humor, European flair, and yes, you want a little bit of murder. The answer my friends is you read this book, the beginning of a delightful new series by Ian Moore. Ian Moore, apparently, I didn't know this, is a successful stand up comedian in the UK. And once I read that, as I finished the book, so many things about the book made sense to me. Like Richard Osman, in The Thursday Murder Club series, the main reason to read this novel is for the sparkling and hilarious dialogue and the inner thoughts of his characters. I was just giggling the entire way through and Death and Croissants gives us these characters with a madcap delight. There's something that is just best described as a frolic or a rollicking good time about this book. It's definitely being sold as a cozy but it's really more I am thinking of as light British or I guess French crime. Sure, there are some predictable elements and the murder does take place off the page. There is no gore to be found. Unless you consider bloody handprint gory, which I obviously do not. But what we find here is something akin to the fun of watching a 40s screwball comedy in the golden age of film. We have our lead character, Richard, who was a middle aged Englishman, but reminded me so much of a handsomely, harried Cary Grant, his sweet, slightly confused about life in general and totally delighted by adventures with his co star. In our case, the beautiful Valerie, he is both frustrated by her and totally over the moon about her, and their relationship is so fun to watch. They are both firmly in middle aged, they are not elderly, but they are not spring chickens. Chickens. When you read the book, you'll understand why that's funny. The mystery is not necessarily the very best mystery plotline I've ever read. But honestly, that was a very secondary concern. As I was enjoying this book. All I wanted in this case was a frothy frolic and this was exactly what I got with buttery crisp edges. This is Death and Croissants by Ian Moore. I will say Kaytee that it has a real really pretty cover and this was one that I found while I was cruising through Blackwell's. It hadn't been on my radar so I've been picking up some really good ones lately, just from my browsing Blackwell's

**Kaytee Cobb** 15:11

Cruising through digitally to be clear,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 15:13

Right like digitally, Yes.

**Kaytee Cobb** 15:15

We all want to go to Blackwell's but you weren't actually cruising like the aisles,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 15:19

right well that'd be the best. Oh my gosh,

**Kaytee Cobb** 15:21

Can we make that happen? That would be so great.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 15:25

All right, what's your next book?

**Kaytee Cobb** 15:26

Okay, my second one this week is Plain Bad Heroines by Emily M. Danforth. This was from the October 2021 Indie Press List from The Novel Neighbor more than a year ago in St. Louis. Our story begins at the Brookhants School for Girls in 1902. The story centered around a book, the best selling memoir of Mary MacLane. In our 1902 timeline Flo and Clara, two young girls at the school are obsessed with this book. They're notating it, they're carrying it around with them everywhere, and they establish together the Plain Bad Heroine society until they end up dead, stung to death by yellow jackets in the apple orchard. And there's yellow jackets all over the cover of this book. It's so fabulous.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 16:08

It's so good.

**Kaytee Cobb** 16:10

More than 100 years later, the now abandoned and crumbling, Brookhants is back in the news when Wonderkind writer Merritt Emmons publishes a book celebrating the queer feminist history surrounding the haunted and cursed Gilded Age institution. Her best selling book inspires a controversial horror film adaptation starring celebrity actor and lesbian it girl Harper Harper which is a stupid name, playing the ill fated heroine flow opposite be list actress and former child star Audrey Wells as Clara. This section of the book reminds me quite a bit of Run Time by Catherine Ryan Howard, where it's like, "Wait, why were these people cast? What's going on here?" And you're trying to kind of peel back a little bit of mystery here. But as Brookhants opens its gates once again and our three modern heroines arrive on set to begin filming, past and present become grimly entangled, or perhaps just grimly exploited. And soon it's impossible to tell where the curse leaves off and Hollywood begins. So there's a dual timeline nature here, right? We have the 1902 story, we have Flo and Clara, and this book and the Brookhants school in 1902, with a lot of yellow jackets. And then we have the 21st century movie counterparts where they're filming this adaptation of what happened at the Brookhants School for Girls more than 100 years ago. I think that dual timeline did this one a disservice, I would have happily read a 300 page book about the 1902 storyline, or a 300 page book about a film adaptation of something that happened in the past, but squashing them together meant that everything got diluted. It was kind of like I read 500 pages about four people I didn't care about very much. So instead, I wasn't really invested in any of them fully. And I felt like I was floating in this dream state between all of them like, oh,



wait, is this the real Flo or is this the movie Flo? Oh, it's that Harper Harper dum dum. Okay, that now I know where I am, again, like kind of just wandering around in a maze outside of Brookhants School. Each of them felt utterly interchangeable to me. The drama of Hollywood and the creepiness of the school would have been sufficient to make this book unputdownable. Instead, it was a bit of a convoluted grind. Overall, I enjoyed it enough to finish it. And I'm glad I had a buddy reading schedule to keep me going and to get through this one. But it was only about a three and a half star read for me. And I really I just would have wanted it tightened into one storyline with a really good focus. So this was *Rlain Bad Heroines* by Emily M Danforth. I do recommend the actual book because you get the illustrations and the map and everything about the book is the way to go.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 18:52**

I was gonna say, I haven't... this is one that has been I was very interested when we did the IPL episode. One I'm very much looking forward to and I had set to read it this October right then of course, my October was all kerfuffled. And so then, now I've kind of put it off, but I will be interested to see I'll bring it when I do read it. And we'll kind of compare notes and see what we thought about it. So that's interesting. Okay. All right. My next book is *My Lovely Wife* by Samantha Downing. This is a thriller. Here's the setup. And it's a simple one too. Nice, attractive people meet, fall in love, get married, have kids moved to the suburbs, and then they get bored. And this has happened to all of us, right? We understand this story. This couple, everything about them screams normal, everything. They're your neighbors. They're the parents of your kids, friends, the acquaintances that you keep meaning to get together for dinner with but they've entered middle marriage, and they really want to keep their spark alive. We all do things to try to keep things interesting. Their thing just happens to be murder. All right, I read this book, I'm gonna, I'm gonna just totally tell you the truth. I read this book because I was going to, I was scheduled to go to an event where the author was going to be, and I had never read anything by her and I didn't want to go into that event with that being the situation, right. But I wasn't necessarily looking that forward to it because it seemed like a very standard popcorn thriller. And I'm really trying hard to not read books with the word wife, or daughter in it. So I was very pleasantly surprised by this book. I will additionally say that the trope of couples killing together is not one that I gravitate to at all. It's not, I don't... I never found a lead character that's doing a bad thing. Like that just doesn't appeal to me. The writing of this book is what made the difference here. So yes, this book has a lot of the, the standard ingredients of a popcorn thriller. But the characters are really well developed, we get much more backstory and layers of character development than we normally do in that kind of book in that genre. And there were lots of little plot details that she stuck in, that made me feel like I was able to participate in solving the mystery, which is another one of my arguments against most popcorn thrillers. There were some plus elements here, too, that made this book more interesting to me. This was very much a book about middle marriage and all the things both good and bad, that make up that very specific season of many of our lives. And there was a lot about parenting, especially parenting in suburbia that rang really true to me. And this book does have the requisite big twist, but I don't feel like it was completely out of the blue. So I gave it credit for that. So when I really thought about it, I actually think that this is a book that's much better thought it less as a thriller, and more as domestic suspense since that genre has been so solid these days. Overall, I think it's a great example of domestic suspense. And I am definitely wanting to read more by Samantha Downing. So this is *My Lovely Wife* by Samantha Downing.

**Kaytee Cobb** 22:24

All right, yes, I did read that one in 2019. I barely remember it, obviously. Cuz I was like, Wait, did I?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 22:33

Well, and I mean that. Yeah, I mean, it's again, it's not a life changing book. But I did find a few hours snuggled under a blanket. It was very took me out of my head and I I enjoyed it.

**Kaytee Cobb** 22:46

Yeah, yeah, sometimes that's all you need from a book anyway. Right?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 22:50

Exactly. All right. What's your third book?

**Kaytee Cobb** 22:52

Okay, my third book this week makes me sparkle and glow a little bit. I'm going to tell you about The Ogress and the Orphans by Kelly Barnhill. Oh good. This is pure delight. So if you feel like we had too much like sad memoir or murder or whatever, let me tell you about this one. Kelly Barnhill has been a huge hit for me in the past with The Girl Who Drank the Moon, which I gave five stars to in 2017. Earlier this year, we both read when women were dragons by her and for me it felt a little convoluted and it didn't have enough feminist rage, so I didn't love it as much as I want it to this one. Back in her middle grade wheelhouse for me was perfection. We are in the fictional town of Stone-In-The-Glen. It used to be a perfect little place, but lately it's fallen on hard times, especially after the fire that burned the town library to a crisp and all the bookworms sobbed a little in their little in their podcast listening days.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 23:53

Oh no.

**Kaytee Cobb** 23:53

Thankfully though, they have a great mayor who keeps the townspeople safe from the dastardly dragon that destroyed their lovely library. After all, their mayor is a famous dragon slayer. Or at least no one ever sees dragons when he's around. So they're pretty sure he's a dragon slayer. Toward the center of this little town is a house full of orphans, orphans, Meredith fifteen orphans. They are smart and inventive and full of stories. But they're also hungry. There's rarely enough to go around to feed the man and the woman that take care of them and the 15 of them. That's a lot of mouths to feed. The children of the orphan house are some of the very few people in town who can see how dire the circumstances are. Well them in ogress, who lives in the woods. She only comes out at night because sunlight bothers her skin. But when she does so, she bakes treats for the townspeople and brings home grown veggies to the steps of the orphan house. But one day a child goes missing from said orphan house. The mayor is sure that the ogress is behind it. "Go get her. Send a mob." And so is the butcher for that matter, so the townspeople start to make it known that they don't want her here anymore. There's rock throwing and pitchforks and such, she's obviously a problem. The orphans however, know that this is not the case. Our sweet and loving ogress is a safe place to land for children who get lost in the woods. She makes sure they get home safe and sound. It's up to these kiddos these brave, smart kind and hungry kiddos to get the townspeople to see what's really happening and turn their town back into the kind and



lovely place that it used to be. My sweet middle grade loving heart just exploded reading this book. It went immediately onto my keeper shelf onto the shelf of I cannot wait to read this aloud to my kids or my grandkids. On to the pick this up when you need a hug or smile shelf. It's funny and kind and a swing up. I read this one in a single day, alternating back and forth with the paper and the audio because I couldn't get enough of this story. If I had to set my book down, I still wanted to be reading it. Both formats are excellent. If you are an adult that loves middle grade like me, this story probably goes the ways you think it's going to go. It's not twisty and turny and mysterious, right. From that setup, you probably have a pretty good idea of where we're gonna go with this book. But it also has much more than the setup makes it sound like. It's about the power of books and community and conversation. It's about friendship and siblings and quotes and storytelling, and it's about making the place you live into the place that you want to live. I loved it so much. It was so great. It's making my cheeks flush with happiness. It's *The Ogress and the Orphans* by Kelly Barnhill.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 26:36**

Well, that's one that I have seen multiple times and said, "Well, I really need to pick that up". But I'm definitely going to because everything about that is that's what I'm looking for in my middle grade. Exactly. I don't want twisty in my middle grade reading. I want a lot of orphans and 15 is a lot of orphans. I want them to go missing. I mean that for sure. I want you know so that sounds that sounds great. I love it. All right. All right, Kaytee. Well, I'm going to end our current read section by talking a bit about a book that both you and I have read that we both were kind of bowled over by this is a book that made such an impression when it was a part of this October to last month's Indie Press List from Bookmarks North Carolina. And I just said to you, I know that we don't often bring Indie Press List books, especially reasonably current ones to the show. But this book deserves as wide an audience as we can possibly get because it is one of my favorite books of the year. You are definitely going to hear it in our our end of year wrap up. This is *Comfort Me with Apples* by Catherynne M. Valente. And it's so important that I not give away a single thing. Like this is one of those books that I just want to step so carefully that I am going to use the marketing copy. You guys know we only do this in the most important of settings where we do not want to go wrong. Here's the setup. Sophia was made for him, her perfect husband. She can feel it in her bones. He is perfect. Their home together in Arcadia Gardens is perfect. Everything is perfect. It's just that he's away so much and so often. He works so hard and she misses him. And he misses her. He says he does so it must be true. He is the perfect husband and everything is perfect. But sometimes Sofia wonders about things, strange things, dark things. The look on her husband's face when he comes back from a long, long business trip. The questions he will not answer. The locked basement she is never allowed to enter. And whenever she asks the neighbors, they can't quite meet her gaze. All right, Kaytee, this is one of those books that I was talking about when I said that short books have been working for me this book is well under 200 right at 100 pages if I remember correctly, right. So it is short. I read it twice in one night. So I read it. I was completely bowled over. I immediately texted three of my close reader friends and said "Please download this to your Kindle now. And yes, I mean now". And then I set about reading it again. And by the time I read it the second time, those three people were texting me saying, "Holy Hannah, what did I just read?" And so then we all got to talk about it got together in a bookish group. There were 11 of us. 10 people had already read it one person hadn't and the look on the other 10 of our faces when we realized we couldn't just talk. All you want to do is talk about this book. But we of course didn't want to ruin it for that. Right? Because it would be ruined.

**Kaytee Cobb** 30:08

Like send her to the bathroom. Hey, could you go refill all our snacks?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 30:11

No, because I just felt like, well, I felt like that. But then I felt like it would end up being 30 minutes. And then I just, you know, I don't want to make anyone feel like they can't be a part of a conversation. But this was far and away the top selling book of last month's Indie Press List. I think Bookmarks said that they reordered it four times just to keep up with demand. And it is absolutely like nothing I've ever read before. It's been marketed in some cases as a thriller. We talked about this in the Indie Press episode. It's even being compared to like a *Gone Girl* in some of the marketing materials. And man, I think that is just an... that is a wrong. That is not what you find here. What you find here is actually so much more interesting than *Gone Girl* that I hate that comparison for a couple of different reasons. So to me, it's a lot more I compared it more to *Piranesi* in that it's not about the same thing, in that you have to kind of trust it. Because as you're reading it, you're like, What is going on? There's something strange. And then you just kind of have to let it reveal itself. Now some people got the reveal really early. Some people like me took me 75% Right. How far through the book were you Kaytee, when you got it?

**Kaytee Cobb** 31:29

I was about 40 pages. And when I kind of pieced together what was going on?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 31:35

So about 40% Okay, yeah, it is smart. It is well written. It is just so clever. It begs to be either a book club book, or a book that you plan to read two times in a row. I mean, I was literally getting other source material and grabbing it. And like, you know, I walked away from this book changed. Like, there's like that little brain exploding emoji, which I never use, all of a sudden was my top most used emoji. Because I was just like, that's how I felt. I felt like, what just happened. I absolutely loved this book.

**Kaytee Cobb** 32:18

Right. And so because we both were messaging each other when we finished it, it was very, in real time commentary, which we try not to do with any press list books. We try to save that for the actual episode. But we couldn't stop ourselves and together decided that we would make this a bookish friends buddy read for the month of November, which means per my wish, a few weeks ago, we also rolled out a new thing for the bookish friends, we started using an app called Fable where people can react to chapters of books in a buddy read in real time. So it's been so fun for me for the past two weeks to watch comments come in, where people are like, I think this is what's happening, or I'm wondering about this. And then every single to a person. I get exploding head emojis as my notifications. Like, what what is happening, even the people who at the end decided they did not like this book. And I think that's important that that you can not like this book and still think yes, whoa, there's exploding head emojis happening here because of where you get to go with a story, with this short story. So I absolutely am going to reread it before we do the Zoom discussion about it. But in real time, that will have happened the day before this episode releases. So I do want to take the second kind of hijacking Meredith's current read to say we are going to start rolling out those Fable discussions. So bookish friends get to take part in a zoom and talk to each other live for our monthly buddy reads. But Fable book club will be

open to everyone who wants to read along with us for that month's buddy read, which means there's real time reactions. There's a schedule that you can follow or not because there's no spoilers because of the way this app is formatted. All of it. I'm just so excited to get to read with, hopefully 1000s of readers at once, and really get into the nuances of a story and everybody will have the chance to know what a big fat buddy read is like because this is the app that was made for it.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 34:19

Absolutely. I am loving Fable. I think that that's going to be really, really fun. And this book is the perfect because this book just begs for conversation. It begs like when you if you find yourself reading it on your own, you're like, Oh no, I need someone. So then you can just log on to the app and check out other people's experiences with reading this book. So yes, I highly recommend it. It's Comfort Me with Apples by Catherynne M. Valente

**Kaytee Cobb** 34:47

Love it. I'm so glad you brought that one to the big show.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 34:49

I love it. Okay. All right. So let's talk a little bit about our deep dive which is finding your nonfiction fit And so you know, a lot of podcasts, it's Nonfiction November, so a lot of bookish conversation everywhere is about nonfiction. And you know, so you can get a lot of great recommendations. But we wanted to do something just a little bit different and talk about like, how, you know, sometimes I feel like even though I'm so ensconced in the reading world, sometimes I get stuck thinking that nonfiction is memoir. And of course, I know it's not but it, that's the groove my mind goes to when I think about nonfiction, and so it's good to say like, But wait, there's so much that is nonfiction that memoir is not my groove. So how do I find those places that are right for me, Kaytee? So when you first started thinking about this, how to find your nonfiction fit, what did you think about?

**Kaytee Cobb** 35:49

Well, first I just like you're talking about I thought about the breadth that is ensconced in nonfiction like I do have a memoir groove. Anybody that's been around for a while knows that I love a memoir, especially one that is read by the author. I listened to, you know, Michelle Obama tell her story, and Viola Davis tell her story, and it doesn't matter if I know that person ahead of time. It doesn't matter if I already follow them on Instagram or care about what they said about anything else. I love getting into somebody's story. But then I also love personal growth. And like Gretchen Rubin, Brene Brown, The Lazy Genius, anything that makes my life more efficient. I'm all about that noise. And finally, I really also love history, which if you told 10 year old Kaytee, no, if you told 10 year ago Kaytee, that she was going to love history one day, she would laugh in your face and probably spit on your shoes, because she would be like "You are full on lying to me, there's no chance". So that that's the most surprising one for me. But so I've kind of settled into these three buckets of nonfiction, which made me think about our episode last year, Meredith about finding our reading themes. It was episode 24 of season four. And we chose three reading themes for each of us that kind of encompass our reading life. And I think for anybody looking for their nonfiction fit, that's the place to start. It's finding your own reading themes, and then figuring out how nonfiction fits into your buckets of reading.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 37:18**

Absolutely. I think you're absolutely right, because one of the things that I, you know, I can think about is that I like to be entertained, right? That's one of my, that's one of my reading themes. And so, but I also like to solve a puzzle. And so true crime, obviously, is an area that I read a lot in, in nonfiction. But when I really think about it, I feel like I've been... true crime is difficult, because there's just not a lot of really good true crime. There's a lot of true crime, but not a lot of very well written true crime. So sometimes I feel like, Oh, I'm just waiting for that next big, great, True Crime book to come out. But sometimes what I think about is, what I like is about true crime is also something that I like about certain kinds of memoir or history books, which is I want to see the dirty underbelly or the behind the scenes behind the curtain. That's one thing that I love about reading mysteries and murder, right? I want to know what happened. So then I think about well, in memoir, no, I might not gravitate naturally toward, you know, the relief, actually the fantastic book that you lead off your current reads with *A Place Called Home*. Because, again, I really feel like I need to read that book. I don't gravitate there. But I really will gravitate towards something that says like, Hey, let me tell you about how drug addicted I was when I was filming 10 of the 11 seasons of friends with Matthew Perry's new book, right? Or the one of the books that I'm reading right now, the new biography about Anthony Bourdain, in the last couple of years of his life. There's a lot of underbelly, there's a lot of what happened there. I like behind the scenes, even with certain kinds of history. You can think like, okay, you know, well, if I read history, does that mean I'm reading you know, Chernow's *Alexander Hamilton* or, you know, right, which is a lot? Yes. Which you could. you definitely could, but there's also, *You Never Forget Your First* by Alexis Coe, which is a biography of George Washington, which is updated, written by a woman, gets into much more of the nitty gritty about how women played into the life of George Washington. So I feel like sometimes finding your fit in nonfiction is to figure out what it is that you mean. Exactly what you said, Kaytee, figure out your reading themes and then you can get in there with nonfiction. I also love things like I'm you know, I'm fascinated by everything related to the White House. Right? So I love things that tell me about the ins and outs of Air Force One, and all the different, you know, systems of Air Force One. There's a brand new book, which now I'm really wishing I remembered the name of it, I think it might be called *Zero Hour*. But it's about the Secret Service. Behind the scenes. What's in the underbelly of the Secret Service? What are some of those stories that have never been told by people who are in the Secret Service? What did they have to do to become, you know, personal guards of the president? All of those kinds of things. I just really, really loved *The Palace Papers*, by Tina Brown. Oh, my gosh, let's look into the underbelly of the British Royal Family. That's what gets me going. So because I know my reading theme that helps me to find my fit in nonfiction, when other kinds of nonfiction are just going to be a complete snore fest for me.

**Kaytee Cobb 40:50**

Yes, exactly. I do think I mean, we're going to I'm going to therapize you a little bit here. Bookish therapize you a little bit. It's interesting, because oftentimes, the stuff that you were mentioning was biography versus memoir. And I do think that's an important distinction in nonfiction because, like, even when you're talking about Tony See, the, the founder of Zappos, and that whole

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 41:14**

Oh, Tony Hsieh

**Kaytee Cobb 41:14**

Tony Hsieh, and, and everything that happened around his death, it seems to me from the outside, which I can't like, type anybody on the Enneagram and I can't tell you your nonfiction. But from the outside, it seems to me that you would rather someone else tell that story to give you more of that underbelly. More of that grittiness more of that. Well, is that really what happened? Or is that just how he wanted to put it on the page kind of thing? And I think that's important to know about yourself as a reader.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 41:41**

I think that's a very interesting point. And it seems really obvious to me, now that you say it like that. But you're right. I have a natural skepticism toward people telling their own story. And very rarely is it a good, a good fit for me, because I'm always like giving it side eye so that's a really, yes. That's very useful, bookish therapy. Thank you, Kaytee.

**Kaytee Cobb 42:06**

You're welcome. So I want to point out that, that maybe you love murder, like Meredith and so you want more of that, because that bucket for you is really, really big. So you do want to dig into more true crime, or more police procedural? How does the Secret Service work? Or how does a police officer work in his job, that kind of thing, or maybe you've already filled that bucket with your fiction picks. And so then you need to look at your other reading themes in order to find a nonfiction to balance that out, right? So maybe you want sweetness and light in your nonfiction because you're full up on murder, and that's okay, too. But knowing how those three themes play into your reading life, that's what's gonna help you discover what the nonfiction fit is. And also letting your interests guide you like Meredith talking about how she loves the White House. I love a chef memoir. I love getting to see inside the kitchen. Like Ruth Reichl. I love getting to see inside the publishing industry. And those are kind of niche nonfiction spots. But I know that they're going to be hits for me. So I do seek them out. And then they usually are hits for me, which is great for my reading.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 43:16**

Yes, I think another thing that a reader was talking with me about is that sometimes figuring out what your favorite movies are, or television shows like what you're drawn to there, you can that helps you figure out what themes you you know, what you might want to explore nonfiction. This particular reader I'm thinking of was like, I love a mob movie. I just love a mafia movie. And I was like, there is so much nonfiction, that is really well sourced and really interesting. But you could read a lot about the mob, the mafia and the history of all of that. And you could go way back or you could keep it more current, you could deep dive into a certain location or locale. It's just there's all kinds of things. She was like, "Oh my gosh, I never really thought about using nonfiction in that way". Another thing that I sort of the yin to the yang of my murder stuff is that I love a... when someone finds either a project or something that they want to explore like The Happiness Project, right Gretchen Reuben's Happiness Project. I love to read a book like that, where it's like January, I concentrated on this aspect of happiness. Another book I loved along those lines is The Year of Living Danishly by Helen Russell. It explores all the sort of all I mean, it explores Danish culture, but also all things Hygge. And so what is the background there? What how do you live a more Hygge-ish life? And that was really interesting for me. So there's lots of books that follow that kind of project format, either a deep dive into a specific topic that you might want to

follow yourself or that you might just want to read through somebody's journey and do something similar. Of course, in the last few months, a lot just a few months ago. I did a deep dive into all things Julia Child and I both watched the movie and read the book, Julie and Julia. And of course, the real life author of that book just passed away this week at just 49. She had a heart attack and died at 49, which is really, really sad to me. But it made me think about I did a whole nonfiction flight based on Julia Child, and I just really let myself go down that rabbit hole about everything about her life, and her recipes, and her process and all of that. And so that's, that's one of the things that I really enjoy is nonfiction that kind of makes me feel like a, almost like a school related project. But like in the best possible way, like a project I got to make myself.

**Kaytee Cobb** 45:47

I like that a lot. I also really like the idea of letting what you're reading in fiction guide you into your nonfiction fun, like, I don't know why you dove into Julia Child more, but even if it was Love and Saffron, and that fictional story and then saying, you know, I loved that story. And I really want to get into more about Julia Child because of the idea or Lessons in Chemistry because, you know, cooking shows, or whatever, or even The Count of Monte Cristo, and then moving on to The Black Count, which is the story of the real Count of Monte Cristo, written by Tom Reiss, great fiction or nonfiction, history, biography kind of mash up, that really adds depth to the stories that you're already reading. And I love doing that with my nonfiction as well and saying, oh, you know, I, I'm really enjoying The Mountain in the Sea, which is a great book, and I want to learn more about octopuses. Or I want to learn more about AI, and how that is developing in our world. And so picking a nonfiction pairing for something that you're already interested in and kind of feeding that, that deep dive rabbit trail by going deeper into it.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 46:57

I love that. I'm rarely as happy as when I have like, gotten a bunch of books from the library that are all related to the same thing. And I'm kind of like putting them all in front of me and, you know, going into them and making notes and all of that. It's there's something really satisfying about that. So, so yes, so there is a lot of really, really good nonfiction, and figuring out what your reading themes are. Which if you haven't heard that episode, I would highly recommend that you go listen to that deep dive because that was one that we got a lot of feedback from people finding really useful. And then think about that having to do with maybe one or two or more nonfiction books that you want to get into this year.

**Kaytee Cobb** 47:36

Perfect.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 47:36

All right, Kaytee, let's visit the fountain and make a couple of wishes. What are you wishing for? A lot of your wishes seemed to be coming true.

**Kaytee Cobb** 47:45

I know. It's really exciting for me. Yeah, manifesting wishes. Okay, so this week is super easy. My wish is to share about Everyday Reading, and Janssen Bradshaw, her reading calendars. So I've been following Janssen over at Everyday Reading from when she was in quotes, "just a blog". Because 10, 15 years now, I've been following the same blogger. And now she's a great follow on Instagram. But her



email list is one of a few that I stay on because she creates some really great content for adult readers and for the kids around them. So today, my wish is that you go check out her website, but especially her Christmas reading advent calendar, which released this morning, as I was prepping this episode. She has done this Christmas reading advent calendar for many years. And if you don't like the one from 2022, you can totally go back to 2019, 2020 or 2021 instead. And they're so fun. She also does them for other seasons. So she does like a school year one, she does a Halloween one, she does a summer reading one. And we print them out on a big sheet of paper like blueprint size at Office Depot, tack it up on the wall at kid height and the kids color in a little bit each day after we read together. So by the end of the month, it's this lovely poster size colorful addition to our decor. And the kids feel a lot of investment in making sure that we read every day so that they can color in that day's little tiny piece. So for Halloween, it was like a bat and a piece of candy and a ghost and each day you could color in a separate one. So sometimes I print five copies a letter size so that each of us can color our own. And sometimes I print one big one and it becomes part of our house decor like I'm doing for the Christmas one this year. But I love just filling it up throughout the season. And having that be part of our reading routine as a family knowing that by reading together we get to add to this really gorgeous scene on our walls.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:38**

I totally agree. I follow her on Instagram too and she's a great follow. She's always giving us great ideas to just keep ourselves and our families reading so even though I don't have little littles, I still I still like her a lot. Okay, so my wish is that everyone would finally jump on the ASMR bandwagon because the ambiance rooms, right so this is where we put on our computer or our phone or our I put it on my television when I hook it up to YouTube TV, and I put on an ambiance room of some sort. It either matches the season or the weather. Or a lot of times I like to match my ambiance room when I'm reading to whatever it is I'm reading. So this week, our bookish friend Terry Melton, she recommended a new channel called Well, it was new to me, The Vault of Ambience YouTube channel, and it has got, it seems like it's made for readers because it has got every kind of ambiance setting that you could possibly want. It's got enchanted forests, creepy graveyards, pirate ships that are on the ocean, gently creaking back and forth. It's got Western scenes, it's got fairies, hobbits, you know, 18th century laboratories, everything you could possibly want. I mean, I challenge you to find a book that you couldn't find an ambiance scene in The Vault of Ambience to match and I love matching my books to my ASMR room. It just makes me so happy. And so I wish that everyone in this quiet sort of darker season, it's a perfect opportunity. At nighttime, put on a fire throw up an ambiance room, you can find ones that have very little sound just a little firecracker, a little bit of snow or a little bit of rain. And you can find ones that have music. I obviously don't like music, so I never choose the ones with music but take the take the journey as it's right for you. There's an ambiance room out there. And I highly recommend starting with The Vault of Ambience, which of course, we will link to in the show notes just like we will link to Everyday Reading. Those are two good wishes, Kaytee to make everyone's reading better.

**Kaytee Cobb 51:58**

I almost want to take The Vault of Ambience and let that guide my reading. I realized this makes you want to throw up in your mouth, but be like, oh, there's a there's an ambiance room for this. What kind of book could I like? Like go the other way and find a book.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 52:13

That actually doesn't bother me because I could use that to play into my moods, right? So I could be like, let me look the ambiance room to figure out what my mood is. And then let that guide my choice. So that still goes with my with my moods. So that's a good idea. I like that a lot. All right, 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** 52:38

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

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 52:42

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](http://currentlyreadingpodcast.com).

**Kaytee Cobb** 52:52

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

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 52:59

And if you want more of this bookish content, there is a lot more where this came from or if you want to take part in our buddy reads that we do regularly, become a patreon supporter for just \$5 a month. You get access to all of that and you keep the show commercial free. You can also rate and review us on Apple podcasts and shout us out on social media. All of those things help us to find our perfect audience.

**Kaytee Cobb** 53:24

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

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 53:28

Alright, until next week, may your coffee be hot

**Kaytee Cobb** 53:31

and your book be unputdownable.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 53:33

Happy reading Kaytee.

**Kaytee Cobb** 53:35

Happy reading Meredith